

MECHAMORPH

ANIMECO

The Official Magazine of the
Japanese Animation Society of Hawaii

Summer 1997 Number 7

But We Digress
Anime and the Internet

Toni-Chan Explains It All...
The Deeper Significance Of Cuteness.

Anime Shopping in Ikebukuro
Adventures In Sunshine City!

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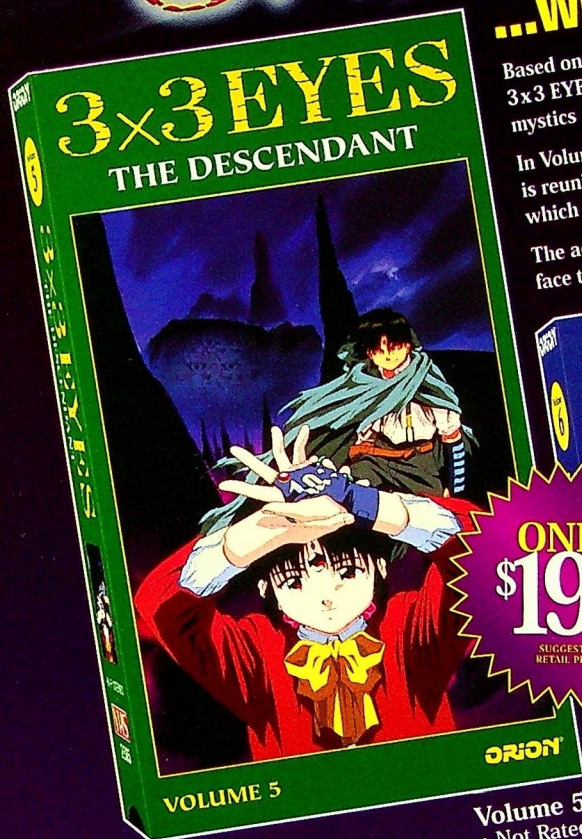
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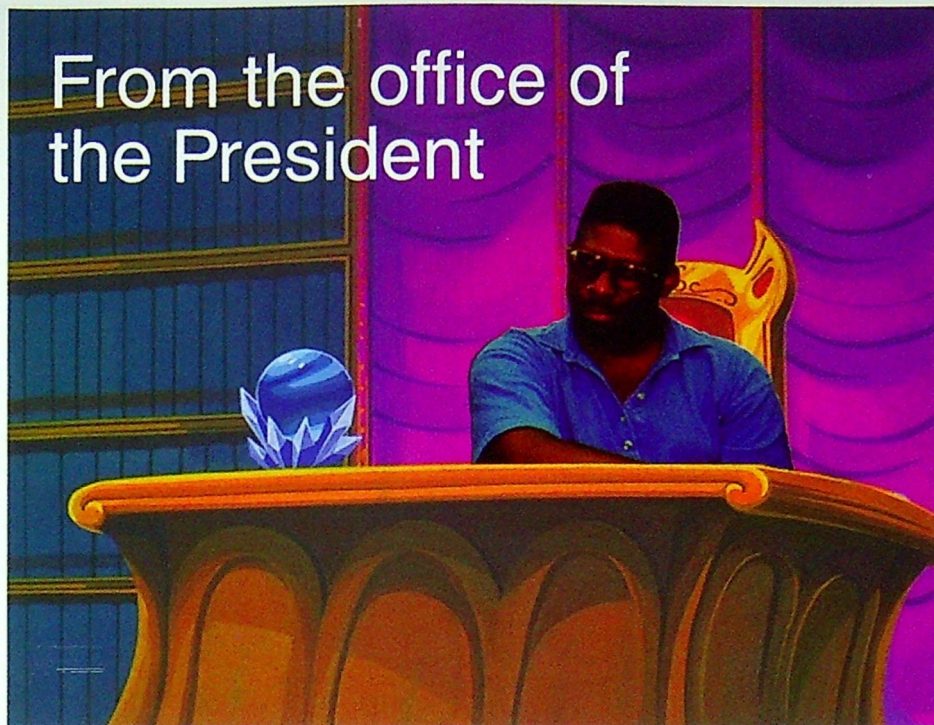
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From the office of the President



The July 12, 1997 issue of *TV Guide* is largely devoted to what it calls the "new wave" of TV animation. The editors gush, "Cartoons have been liberated from Saturday mornings, and we say, Hurray for that!... Television animation is not just for kids anymore... With their irreverent humor, offbeat graphics, and quirky vocal performances, [these] shows cut across demographic lines to attract viewers of all ages." They go on to praise such new shows like *Spawn*, *Spicy City* and *King of the Hill*, as well as established hits such as *The Simpsons*, *The Tick*, and *Duckman*.

WHERE HAVE THESE GUYS BEEN?!

Have they forgotten *Sailor Moon* so quickly? (All right, all right, maybe that's not the best example...) Have the editors ever seen *Dragonball Z*? Did they somehow miss *Robot Carnival* on the Sci-Fi Channel? Graphic violence, offbeat themes, quirky vocal performances... we anime fans have had all that for years!

Consider *Aeon Flux*. Didn't you think it was anime when you first saw it? In style alone, it was more like the Japanese product than anything yet seen over here; but could it hold its own against, say, *Bubblegum Crisis*? Fox Network should run *that* for two months and see the ratings they'd get!

It is true that the new American animation is being done by people who, like me, have memories of the original *Jonny Quest* and similar shows. But anime has been a subculture in this country for almost twenty years, and some artists and animators acknowledge their debt to it. And anime fans are very loyal; *Ghost in the Shell* didn't have a million-dollar ad campaign on TV, but it earned more money than the *Beavis and Butt-head* movie, which did.

When I can watch animation as varied as what's on Japanese TV every night of the week, then I'll agree that cartoons have been freed from the Saturday-morning ghetto. Meanwhile, those viewers who think they have sophisticated tastes are invited to join us *otakus* (yes, even *TV Guide*), and learn that *Spawn* is a very small American chip from a very big anime iceberg.

Milton Streeter
JASH President

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Streeter

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Reviews you can use

We have a winner!

Rebecca Scott from Greenville North Carolina has won the Free Stuff contest for Spring. She was able to correctly identify more than half of the items shown in the Annie picture on page 5 of the Spring 1997 issue. The fact that no one else entered is irrelevant.



Along with the list of stuff, she gave us this piece of fan art and a short note:

She is one of my favorite animated characters! Also Sailor Mars (who I dressed up as for Halloween). My favorite anime video is "Ninja Scroll" (Jubei is a babe! I just wish he wouldn't get hurt so much.)

Here is a more or less complete list of items to be found:

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Dave's Ice Cream quart- Chocolate Chip
Video tape- Evangelion, vol. 2
Video tape- Plastic Little
Video tape- Ushiro and Tora
Video tape- Powerdolls
Video tape- Blueseed, Rebirth
Four Corners Chardonnay
Hanae Mori Perfume (12 oz)
Ozeki sake
Western Family black pepper
Kikkoman™ shoyu (soy sause)
Godiva™ cocoa
Venetian blinds
Brick wall
Air Conditioner
Betty Boop 1997 calendar
Doonsbury comic strip
Chair
Table
Post-it™ Note
Plate
Stuffed animal lobster
Wite™ board
Computer speaker
Elmer's® glue
TV stand
Power cord
2 electrical outlets
Oh yeah, and Annie

Some folks may think it's obvious, but you wouldn't believe how many people here at the Animeco office are asked if we're "Anime Heroes." We always answer "No, we're big anime fans, but we're not anime heroes." So to help out those of you who might still be confused, we've decided to give you folks a little self-test to see if *you*, in fact, might be an anime hero.

- < If a mysterious stranger takes a really close interest in you...you might be an anime hero.
- < If you can pilot a powerful military vehicle with a musical instrument...you might be an anime hero.
- < If your home has a direct line to Civil Defense...you might be an anime hero.
- < If the people around you start ripping to pieces in bloody explosions...you might be an anime hero.
- < If you met your significant other in a duel...you might be an anime hero.
- < If your swimming pool doubles as your garage/vehicle storage ...you might be an anime hero.
- < If your father creates a state-of-the-art android from junkyard scrap...you might be an anime hero.
- < If you can take on a bunch of roguish misfits and turn them into a crack combat unit in 24 hours...you might be an anime hero.
- < If you can fly a fighter into an impenetrable enemy fortress and make an impossible shot...you might be an anime hero. (...or a farm-boy from a backwater planet.)

Special thanks to "Fido".



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Okay. Maybe it wasn't a good idea to let Annie act as receptionist...

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Send all bribes to me, c/o those Limelight Publishing guys. - ayh

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Write Here!

Have you got a complaint, comment, correction, artwork or just a thought you'd like to share? We'd love to hear from you.

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LETTERS

From: "Julianne Maeda" <hotohorisama1@hotmail.com>
To: whols@aloha.net
Subject: Hurray to all you artists and the staff!

Dear Animeco,

Cool art guys keep up the fan art section because I know I'll be staring in this section for awhile. By the way, I really think that "Poe" is really "KAWAII" and the arts by Sherry Sasuga, Iris Mori, Roy Sato, Audra Furuichi, Florencio Lim Jr., Christina Chun, and also Susan "O-HIME-SAMA" Kihara and Gwen "Cute Anime Guy, Where?" Sato and to the 2 well known artists Tygger Graf and Robert DeJesus, GREAT WORK GUYS and KEEP IT UP!!!! *grin* ^-^

ANIME, ANIME, ANIME,
Julianne Maeda

Thanks for the compliments! We asked for a comment from Poe and all he said was "meh." - ITM

From: OoGiYGaSoO@aol.com
To: whols@aloha.net
Subject: Animeco

Dear JASH members, and Animeco staff,

Your magazine is one of the best I have seen in awhile. It features articles and updates that (I think) people want to see. Unlike Animerica, and other Anime-related magazines, you don't fill your magazine pages with 100's of advertisements, and I think that's great. I especially liked the fall, and summer issue. I loved the article on Anime schools, it was very informative. Now, I would like to make a few suggestions that might help you make your magazine even BETTER.

- #1. If you added a little color here and there, it couldn't hurt.
- #2. I think that it would be nice to have a few pages totally full of fan mail, and pictures.
- #3. MORE ANNIE MAY HITAKA!

Other than that, your magazine totally rulez!

L8r - GiYGaS

Yes, I agree that we should have more color pictures of me. How will this happen? Spam Animeco, and tell them !! — AYH



Submitted by Karl Kletzer

To: whols@aloha.net
From: Parker Wilson <ptwilson@pasiton.com>

I THINK ANIMATION IS REALLY COOL, I LOVE DRAWING JAPANESE ANIMATION AND GOING TO ANIMATION CONVENTIONS. I WOULD LOVE IT IF I COULD HAVE A PICTURE OF SAILOR VENUS FROM SAILOR MOON. THANK YOU.

We like animation too. If you want a picture of Sailor Venus, I recommend the Anime Web Turnpike. - WPH

Dear Messieurs Hols & Streeter, and JASH as whole.

Greetings and felicitations. I am writing to comment on Animeco in general and issue #5 specifically—in a word, yum (or should I say, oishii)!

In particular, Mr. Wong's off handed comment in "But We Digress" about Utatane prompted me to craft a response: Hiroyuki Utatane is the creator of titles Countdown: Sex Bombs and Temptation (their American titles), both published by Fantagraphics's Eros Comix in cooperation with Studio Proteus. I recommend both of these to anyone with an interest in adult comics. For more Utatane see the two Countdown videos, both released by Soft Cell/A.D.Vision. (If Mr. Wong was being sarcastic, my apologies to him. "Didactic" is one of my favorite modes, and I find it difficult to resist a "straight line.")

Just to let you know, my last name is spelled HONG. I was being sort of sarcastic. Shirow is a much bigger name here in the US than Utatane after all. — WMH

As for Animeco in general, I find it informative, well written and enjoyable. You cover offbeat topics the other anime magazines don't, and do so with élan. I like Peter Payne's articles (and his ascerbic wit), Lea Hernandez's covers, and am looking forward to the (presumably forthcoming) shopping guide to Akihabara, having read Peter Evan's ("very" ascerbic net.god) Web page a couple of years ago. In all I find Animeco at least a partial replacement for Anime UK/Anime FX (and done by a fan club, too!). The only real drawbacks for the former compared to the latter is your publication frequency and page count. I vastly prefer this (and this sort of) magazine to America's excess of hype (I only buy "that" for the manga and to try for a complete run—I collect English-language anime magazines). A most commendable effort—please keep up the good work.

Oh, yes. To Dr. Antonia Levi: Welcome, Toni-Chan! I enjoyed your book immensely, and the same for your article! MORE! MORE!! MORE!!! Your writing is extremely readable, and packed with information found nowhere else in the anime-coverage canon. When did you teach at Amherst College? (Extremely shameless plug follows:) I've been in the (Pioneer) Valley since 1987; three years ago we formed the UMass Japanese Animation and Manga Society (UMJAMS) and have been meeting nearly every Monday night when school is in session for the last six semesters. Hampshire College also has a club; meetings are on Tuesdays. At UMass they are in the Campus Center, while the Hampshire meetings are in Adele Simpson Hall (ASH) auditorium. Anytime you're in the area again please stop by—this means any of the readers, too. I look forward to your next article—and your next book (kudos to Mangajin's recently published books column, where I found the first one).

Okay, Messieurs Hols & Streeter, when does Animeco go to an all-color, 200 page monthly square-bound A4 format? I'm waiting...

John C. Watson
Amherst, MA

From: AYHitaka@aol.com
To: whols@aloha.net
Subject: The contest

Dear Animeco Guys (and Girls),

I hate you, I've always hated you, and I can't stand it anymore, so I quit.

There. Now I'm not a friend of Animeco, and I don't work for Limelight Publishing. Can I have a free laser disc prize now?

XO

Annie

No. Sorry, you can't quit. You'd better read your contract again... — Staff

Dear Animeco,

Do you know any good manga/video stores where I could find Slayers and Slayers Next videos? My friend and I are crazy about it! We've been collecting Slayers stuff for a long time, and it's hard to find stores that sell videos of it. Aren't Software Sculptors producing enough of the merchandise? Anyway here's a picture I worked on. Hey Iris, in the Winter issue, who were you talking about when you said "there's a character in the next group of episodes that's one of my favorites..."? My fav is Zelgadis. Keep up the good work! See ya!

Jamie Martin
Marina Del Ray, CA

Glad to find a fellow Slayers-fiend. I was referring to Amelia, but Gourry is my all time fave – cute, and he is good with a sword! Whoo-hoo! Try Suncoast for videos, and the bookstore at Yaohan Plaza in Japantown (Los Angeles) for manga; Slayers Try is only available (at the moment) on LD in Japanese. — ITM



Yaho and welcome to what I like to call, "Pond in a Bag"—that is, Ikebukuro. Ikebukuro seems to have an obscene number of department stores all clustered in one area...but still, not as many as, say, Shibuya or Shinjuku. There's only about 5 clustered around the station here. But Ikebukuro is best known to outsiders (and locals alike) for Sunshine City. But we'll get to that in a few minutes...

So get on the JR line and get off at Ikebukuro—then hop on the Yurakucho subway line and get off at the Higashi-Ikebukuro stop. Then take the Sunshine City exit—you should be right next to some car dealership. Walk past the car dealer, and turn right after the gas station. Wave to the poor souls who are sweating in this humid Tokyo summer heat, catering to the guy sitting in his air conditioned car. See how they smile and wave back? Gas station folks are paid to be nice. And they give you a free box of Kleenex™ for filling up your car. Isn't that nice? Walk all the way down to the end of the block, past the teeny police box. Across the intersection there should be a roundish building with pretty blue glass. This is the **Amlux** building—a car showroom. Look to your left, across the intersection. See the bright orange sign that says **Manga no Mori**? There's one right behind the sign. This **Manga no Mori** isn't as impressive as the one I mentioned in the last issue, it being only one floor, but it does have some cool mooks on a small shelf next to the register. And surprise! Its American comic collection is pretty impressive, for Japan. X-Men fans, get your comics in Japanese, here! Stand outside **Manga no Mori** with your back to the shop. Point straight ahead, then move your arm 45° to the left. See the building with the huge sign in front that says "anime" in katakana? (If you can't read "anime" in katakana you're not a true otaku so stop reading this article.) It's an anime goods store, on the second

and third floors, much like Animate. Back-track to the Amlux building, and stand facing the ugly brown brick building across the street. This is the famous **Sunshine City**. There's a planetarium (mediocre) and an aquarium (I live in Hawai'i, so it's a bit sad in comparison) on the top floor. Here, also, is the **Sunshine City Prince Hotel**—that's the tall building. So cross the street, turn left, and go a little past the building; you'll see the shopping complex. It's a cool place to wander in—look for the toy store that has the dozens of ¥100 crank machines in front of it—you know, the machines where you crank the silver thing and get anime/video game collector cards, from **Ranma** to **Dragonball** to **Gundam**. Pump enough money into it, and you may be lucky enough to get the special prism card/stickers, worth more to collectors than the rest of the cards combined!

Lunch break!!! Go down the flight of stairs you saw as you passed the **Sunshine City Prince Hotel** and there should be a bread store, the **Vie de France**. I recommend the roll-looking thing with the hot dog sticking out of it, and anything with chocolate on it is a good bet. Stay away from the (I think it's bread) thing slathered with mayonnaise and hidden under a mound of bonito flakes. It's weird. Tastes weird too. For those less (or more?) adventurous there's a **McDonald's** next door. Mickee dee's here still fry their apple pies and cook their french fries in lard. I love it!!

Try the cupaccino milkshakes, and the bacon potato pies. Yummy!

Go back up the stairs, and cross the street. Don't try to jaywalk here, the taxi drivers will run over you. Cross at the intersection by the Amlux, and turn right. There's a little yellow sign that says "**K-Books**" in blue capital letters, outside this boring looking white building. We'll get back to that later. But walk past the sign, and past the soda machine. For those of you who didn't see this from across the street when you were leaving the Sunshine shopping complex, it's **Ani-**

mate!!! Yes, it's the place with the 2 page teasers...er, I mean, advertisements in the anime magazines we love so much. This place carries posters, goods, models, puzzles, telephone cards—you name it. My problem with this shop is that the people are mean (OBVIOUSLY not anime fans) and they feature the "in" anime



Annie's Shopping Guide to Tokyo

Ikebukuro

of the month. When *Ah! My Goddess* was in, about 80% of the store was *Ah! My Goddess*, when *Evangelion* was in, the entire store was *Evangelion*. Don't forget



to go outside to get to the second floor—there's no way to get upstairs to the CD/LD/manga floor from inside the shop. The second floor isn't the best—I've seen a better selection elsewhere. But since prices are the same everywhere, and they stamp the Animate members card the folks downstairs probably gave you, who cares, right? Ho—hohohoho!! (1 stamp for every ¥1000 spent, 20 stamps gets you ¥1000 worth of merchandise, 3 cards gets you a free phone card.)

So backtrack to that K-Books sign. Go into the building, and up the stairs to the second floor. This is a horrible store, especially after you spent all your money at Animate! They have "used" promo posters, dojins, UFO catcher dolls, telephone cards, autographs, goods, LDs, CDs, cells....anime related, you name it, it's here. It's just sick. The real challenge will be to not spend all the money you saved for this trip in this shop. Remember! *you need ¥2000 for the airport tax to get out of the country, and it's around \$150 for each piece of extra luggage you bring onto the plane!!* The selection should be seen to be believed. Bought a special edition *Lodoss War* poster, the one that came only with the LD set, for ¥500, a few phone cards that were given away by *Newtype* magazine for ¥4000, a Son Goku UFO catcher doll



for ¥1500, and a "goody bag" of anime goods for only ¥300. Prices here are more than reasonable, for stuff that would cost hundreds of dollars for in the States, since they're "collector's items" there!

Oh yes. We still had to go somewhere else. Poo. Down the stairs again and all the way down the underground walkway leads you to **Tokyu Hands**, the cool store I described in the Shinjuku tour, but we want to spend more time in K-Books, right?

Okay, okay. We'll leave now. Back to the subway, and back to Ikebukuro. Take the Seibu exit. This is **Seibu Department**

Store's main branch, and even the natives get lost in here, it's so big, so don't worry about looking lost. In this store is the Massively Huge Toy Department. Anything you couldn't find in Harajuku's tour should be here. If you come here around the

time of the playoffs, pray the Seibu Lions win the pennant, because everything in here goes on sale the next day! Wheee!

Walk in any direction and eventually you will get to **Tobu Department Store**. Seibu & Tobu are connected on each floor, you see. It's a plot to get everyone even more lost. On the seventh floor of Tobu is the bookstore. Walk around to get your bearings, then go to the comics section. It makes up for its small size by managing to have just the comic you're looking for! It also has quite a few cheat books on the more popular

video games around. All in Japanese, of course. All in all, this is a great bookstore with an excellent selection, with helpful people.

Dinner Time! On the 7-8th floors of both Tobu and Seibu is a pretty cool horde of restaurants, and one of them is **Pasta Bella**, a Japanese style Italian restaurant. Watch for the sugar container—in it are little sugar cubes that look like Lucky Charms™. Kawaii!! Their cakes are excellent!

That's it for Ikebukuro. Not a lot of places this time, but I more than made up for it with the amount of money I had my bag-carriers spend on me! Join me next issue, when I explore the insanity of Shibuya.



Annie is wearing the latest style in OL (office lady) couture—a Christianne Dior original suit and mini-skirt in putrid light green. Note the unusual cut of the suit and the disgustingly cute bow-ties at the shoulders. Her bone-colored Chanel stockings, especially created for this issue, have an intricate bow-tie design running along the sides. Her matching Hairagamo classic bow-tie shoes and Saline mini-handbag, also in putrid light green, complete the look—now Annie is ready to tackle the challenging world of the Japanese Office Lady! Tea, anyone?

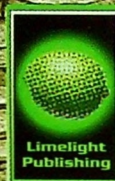


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(Welcome!)

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MINI-CATALOGUE OF VIDEOS AND ZINES

The Item: The 1996 release from White Radish, in which three cute girls (Mecha, Jinx, and Bunni) come together to fight their way through the fortress of Mighty Q'thulhu in their quest for the mysterious Item. "Even cuter" equals "even deadlier" in this fast-paced video of hypercute horror designed and directed by Shawn the Touched. 8 minutes, newly remastered. Not rated. Contains brief nudity, violence. \$9.95 + shipping and handling.



The White Radish Companion: A detailed history of WR, this mini-zine chronicles the origin of WR and the development of the videos, and offers a behind-the-scenes look at the productions themselves, and a preview of upcoming projects. Filled with drawings and stills, it's the perfect guide to any of WR's products. Contains the complete storyboards for The Item, and an illustrated listing of cuts scenes and outtakes from all WR videos. 32 pages, B&W.

The Fast Food Freedom Fighters Companion: If you're a 4F fan, this zine is for you! Contains the complete script to the final version of 4F, as well as several scenes as originally drafted, all fully annotated with liner notes. Finally you can understand the admittedly unintelligible dialogue between Maki and Yen-Zero during their big swordfight! It's more info than you ever thought there could be on a single parody-dub! 24 pages, B&W.



The Lunatic's Gallery: A 1993 collection of art by Shawn the Touched. All drawings are inked, and about half are nude. The art style is from Shawn's more "realistic" anime art era, before he shifted toward hypercute. Includes a two-page manga starring a character from Pink Lemonade, and the artist himself! 14 pages, B&W.

The Lunatic's Gallery: Girls of "The Item" Special: All new, never before seen art featuring Mecha, Jinx, and Bunni! Art is by Shawn the Touched and "Happousai," and portrays the three heroines in a variety of titillating situations. But beware — this one is much spicier than LG1... Also contains a one-page girl-girl comic drawn to test the market. 16 pages, B&W.



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SOUNDS ON CELLULOID

music in japanese animation

By Milton Streeter

One of the hallmarks of being a fan is collecting things pertaining to one's hobby. One of the best things about being an anime fan is collecting (or at least listening to) the music—like anime shows themselves, anime music has evolved over time. In this article, I will try to trace a brief history of this music. I don't claim to know a lot about music in general, but like everyone else, I know what I like. *This* is what I like.

OVERVIEW

Anime music is, of course, an important part of merchandising. A good theme can make a show immortal—there must be lots of middle-aged people in Japan who can remember the themes from *Yamato* or *Candy Candy*. In the early years—say, the early 1970s—that's all the music was expected to do; create a catchy theme that the kids would hum, cue the audience when the funny moments were coming, lend some drama to the action scenes, and that was it. That tradition continues today on the live-action superhero (*sentai*) shows, where it can be seen in its purest form. (Those of you with long memories

can recall such music from shows like *Ultraman*, *Kikaider* or *Sun Vulcan*.)

The most common anime albums are the ones labeled “**Original Soundtrack**”. These are the ones which usually carry the show's opening and end themes, the major musical moments (drama, humor, etc. as mentioned above), and the signature themes of the main characters.

After them comes the “**BGM**” (for BackGround Music) albums. These have additional music from the shows, which is usually only half-heard because there's dialogue laid over it. This way you can hear it without interruption. It's also good background music in real life; I play it sometimes while I study.

The “**Symphonic Suite**” albums are just what they sound like. Although it may seem strange, some of the best anime music was done this way. *Yamato*, *Gundam*, *Queen Millennia* and *Macross* are all examples of this treatment, and no one listening to them for the first time would ever guess it was music from a “cartoon”.

Then there's the “**Image Albums**”. They are music inspired by a given series or OAV, and are strictly hit-or-miss. A few are very good,

but most are junk. You won't hear the original themes here—or if you do, you may not recognize them. Experimenting with unusual arrangements or instruments are common.

“**Drama albums**” usually have an original story, or an abridged version of a story already known to the listener. There is music, and some of it original, but there usually isn't much. Since they are mostly dialogue, avoid them unless your Japanese is good [*or unless you're such an otaku that you don't care!*—Ed.]

THE 1970s

From the 1960s and through the 1970s, all anime music was “original soundtrack”. Most of it was available only on 45 rpm records then, and full albums were quite rare. The earliest-dated album I have seen was for *8 Man*, and that was in 1971. It was, I now know, typical for its time. It contained the opening and end themes, character signature themes, and included many stills from the episodes in the liner notes.

In 1972, Go Nagai's famous *Mazinger Z* set the standards for all that followed. Supported by a merchandising campaign remarkable for its time, *Mazinger*'s theme music was sold in ever-larger numbers along with the toys, lunchboxes and bubblegum that also had the robot's face on it. *Mazinger*'s “rolling thunder”-style music also began a trend in opening



Gundam

themes which peaked in the mid-1980s and still continues today.

Most other albums during this period followed a similar course. Since the super-robots were very popular at that time, the music tailored itself to them. It was very martial, with lots of brass and kettledrums. Outstanding among them is the music of **Kikuchi Shunsuke**. Kikuchi wrote the music for many Toei shows of the '70s, and they were all designed to rouse the blood of 13-year-old Japanese boys; stirring, dramatic, *let's-go-out-there-and-get-'em* themes. Once heard, they tend not to be forgotten, even by those who can't follow the lyrics. A number of his themes are now considered classics. Specific examples of his work are the music for *UFO Robo Grandizer*

gesting the ocean.

Then there was *Mobile Suit GUNDAM* (1979). This show is famous for a number of reasons, and all of them are justified, but its music was rather disappointing. It mostly failed to capture the epic sweep of the series, but in certain areas such as character themes, it did well. The Symphonic Suite *GUNDAM* was the first for a Sunrise production (the others had been for Toei), and sounded better than the original music! Although it did initiate the lush arrangements that would characterize Sunrise programs, it was not until 1985 that Gundam music would really hit its stride.

THE 1980s

The now-defunct studio Kokusai Eigasha produced some of the most interesting anime shows of the decade, and some of the best music. Their "Cosmoranger J9" space adventure series were *Bryger* (1981), *Baxinger* (1982), and *Sasuraiger* (1983). Their theme music was marked by extensive use of hard rock, with emphasis on rhythm guitar. *Baxinger* went one step further with its use of a classical Japanese instrument; composer **Yamamoto Masayuki** played the samisen, producing a sound like an Oriental banjo. The music for the final series, *Sasuraiger*, was written by **Hisaishi Yuzuru (Jo)** and went another way, using styles ranging from soft jazz to



Technovoyager

country-western. In keeping with the tone of the show, it was very light-hearted and whimsical. Hisaishi was and is one of anime's most prolific composers, and would later go on to do music for

Mospeada (1983), *ODIN* (1986), *Robot Carnival* (1987), and two of Hayao Miyazaki's movies, *My Neighbor Totoro* (1988), and *Kiki's Delivery Service* (1989).

Jazz, always popular in Japan, was about to be used in anime again. **Ohno Yuji** returned in 1979 to write music for the second series of *Lupin III* (he'd also done it in '77), and stayed through all 155 episodes and at least three movies, producing a large body of albums in the process. Lupin's music is among the most cosmopolitan in all of anime. Its jazz-based arrangements with horns and woodwinds, plus its use of native English-speakers for many of the songs, make the Lupin albums very pleasant to listen to. They could be broadcast on any "easy listening" radio station in the USA and not betray their origins.

Ohno was also involved in a collaboration with **Haneda Kentaro** (see below). Together, they wrote the music for the short-lived series *Space Cobra* (1982), based on the Teresawa hero.

Haneda himself was very busy that year. Although he did the music for *Technovoyager* (US title:

"In 1972, Go Nagai's famous Mazinger Z set the standards for all that followed... Mazinger's "rolling thunder"-style music also began a trend in opening themes which peaked in the mid-1980s and still continues today..."

(1975), *Gakeen* (1976), and *Getter Robo G* (1977). Two of these series ran on American TV under the title *Force Five* in the early 1980s. Gakeen holds the minor distinction of having the longest opening theme of any anime TV show I know: a full two minutes!

An interesting departure from the pattern was *Captain Harlock* (1978). In keeping with its pirate motif, both its themes and BGM were full of sea chanteys and symphonic pieces sug-

Thunderbirds 2086) and others, his fame rests on just one work: *Macross*. Haneda seems to do his best with epic sagas, and *Macross* would not have been the same without the sweeping orchestral sounds that are his trademark. Listen to the opening theme with its kettledrums and trumpets, or the recurring "combat scramble" in the fighting sequences, and you'll have an idea why *Macross*-related music spans nearly a dozen albums, and why Victor Japan (JVC) made *Macross* music among their earliest transfers from LP to CD format.

We'll come back to *Macross*—and *Robotech*—later.

End themes were, and are, nearly always ballads. Most of them sing about love. Some of them are allegories about endless space, or the eternal quest, or some such thing, but nearly all of them are melancholy. Every now and then, however, an upbeat tune slips in. *Sasuraiger*, mentioned above, had not one, but two such endthemes. One of them was even called "Happy Song", and it stood in cheerful defiance of the trend.

During this time, the themes were sung mostly by men. Some of them were unknowns; some, like the *enka* singer **Sasaki Isao**, found additional fame doing anime songs. Sasaki's strong baritone can be heard on *Mazinger Z* (he even sang that theme in English once), *Galaxy Express 999* (1978), *Gatchaman F* (1979), and the second Harlock series, *Mogenkidoh SSX*



Fujiwara Rie

(1982). **MOJO**, who sang for so many of Toei's live-action superhero shows such as *Dynaman* and *Goggle Five*,

"During this time, the themes were sung mostly by men... However, this doesn't mean that female singers weren't out there...Many...were voice actresses on a particular show, and a number of them got their professional start this way."

also belted out the theme song for *Albegas* (1983). **TETSU**'s song "Destiny of the Flame" helped put *Votoms* (1982) among the classics, and **MOTCHIN** did the same with the theme for *Sasuraiger*. The differences in their styles would make an article by itself, but I'll spare my readers that.

However, this does not mean that female singers weren't out there. While most of them were confined to girls' anime, a number of them have distinguished themselves. Many of the singers were voice actresses on a particular show, and a number of them got their professional start this way.

Iijima Mari—Minmay of *Macross*—comes to mind. Another is **Fujiwara Rie**, who sang the opening theme for *Dancougar* (1985) and was also the voice of series character Laura Sullivan. That same year, **Ayukawa Mami** gave a high-powered performance on "Z-Toki o Koete" and helped place *Zeta Gundam* among the more memorable

shows.

Okay, I hear you ask, what about anime that *didn't* have giant robots in it?

Well, in the '80s there was a lot of what they now call the "magical girl" anime. The first and most famous of these was *Minky Momo* (1981), a fairy princess who had the form of a 12-year-old girl and performed her good deeds in the form of an 18-year-old girl. Go ahead and laugh, but she was loved by a great many people...and she got an all-new series ten years later! The most commercially successful series was the one that followed Momo, *Creamy Mami* (1983). Aspiring singer **Ohta Takako** provided her voice, and since the magical angel Mami was herself an idol singer, Ms. Ohta kept very busy. After Mami came *Pelsia* (1984), *Magical Emi* (1984), who was also an idol singer, and *Pastel Yumi* (1985). The themes for all of these shows were sung by women; unfortunately, I don't know their names.

Toda Keiko was a popular voice actress in the '70s and early '80s. Her most famous role was as the villainess Afrodia in *Space Warrior BALDIOS* (1980); she also sang a song or two for the movie of the same name. Her voice was deeper than most, not the airy, cheerful voice one hears too much of sometimes. It was good enough to merit at least one album of her own, *Who Saw the Wind?*, in 1982.

The pop singer **ANRI** (Kawashima Eiko) got a real career boost by singing the original theme for *Catseye* (1981). The song, apart from the show itself, made it to



Ayukawa Mami

Number One on the Japanese charts; as of this writing, Anri continues to perform live, and "Mysterious Girl" is still part of her repertoire. In the show's second season, the themes were sung by **Tone Mariko**



ANRI

and **Sherri Savage**. Catseye's music was very contemporary, with a strong layer of jazz and disco. The two endtheme credits, "Dancing With the Sunshine" and "Hot Stuff" showed the three Catseye sisters doing aerobics

"...It used to be men who sung anime themes. Now, it's either women, or instrumentals, who do the work..."

in time to the music, and I know for a fact that many aerobics classes in Japan used it for exactly that purpose.

Almost forgotten among all this are some American women who briefly had a voice in cinematic anime. In *Adieu Galaxy Express 999* (1981), the end theme "Sayonara" was written and sung by **Mary MacGregor**, and the following year, **Dara Sedaka** did "Angel Queen", the end theme for the *Queen Millennia* movie. (Dara's father is Neil Sedaka, a singer-songwriter who had a number of top-40 hits of his own in the 1950s and 1960s; MacGregor's most famous piece is the bittersweet 1978 ballad



Shimazu Saeko

"Torn Between Two Lovers".)

But the era of women anime singers really begins with **MIO**. She is one of the best, and certainly among the most popular. She was first heard doing Sunrise's *Aura Battler DUNBINE* (1983), and became closely associated with that studio, because they

used her voice many times after that. She can also be heard on *L-Gaim* (1984), the OAV series *Gundam 0083*, the 1985 robot adventure *Bismark*, and the *Area 88* soundtrack.

Sasuga no Sarutobi (1982) was an action comedy about the goings-on at a ninja high school(!). The end theme was sung by **Shimazu Saeko**, who also played the show's female lead. During her career, she has played many other characters (Yuri of the *Dirty Pair* is among the more famous) and sang for productions ranging from *Tokimeki Tonight* to *Super Cat-Girl Nuku Nuku*. **Nakahara**

Miho sang both themes for the *Dirty Pair* TV series (1985); "Ro-Ro-Ro Russian Roulette" also made it into the Japanese Top Ten. And could we possibly forget **Hirano Fumi**? For all

the songs she did for *Urusei Yatsura* (1981)—among them "Dancing Star" and "Love Me More"—her greatest contribution was simply being Lum's voice. Her own songs were ably supported over the years by **Mazutaka Yuko** ("Lum's Love Song", "Love Is a Boomerang" and many more), **Steffanie** ("Born To Be Free"), **Minami Shoko** ("Good Luck"), and **Cindy** ("Chance on Love").

Note that nearly all of Lum's songs are love songs. That's how it should

be. Whether it's *Sailor Moon* believing in "the miracle of romance", or the Dancougar crew who "just keep burnin' love", there'll always be a place for that kind of music. *Maison Ikkoku* and *Kimagure Orange Road* (both 1986) were two of the most romantic anime ever, and they would not have been as memorable without their love songs.

It used to be men who sung anime themes. Now, it's either women, or instrumentals, who do the work. In between, they seem to have missed something—the male-female duet. There are only a few cases that I know of; Gakeen, mentioned earlier, "Blue Rain", the end theme for *Mospeada*, "Cross Fight!" from the OAV series *Dangaio* (1987). A more recent one is the opening theme of *Blue Seed* (1995). There doesn't seem to be a good reason why there aren't more examples.



Eriko (X2)

It was the "idol singer" phenomenon that we Westerners associate with anime music. While Minmay is the one everyone knows, perhaps the most self-indulgent use of an idol singer in

a show was *Legendary Idol Eriko* (1989), in which **Tamura Eriko** played...herself! She sang the themes, of course, as well as many of the other songs. All of them are pleasant examples of J-pop, and most of them are about love. Some things never change.

But the ultimate idol singer was never in a TV series. We'll get to that, too, next time.

-End Part 1-



Reviewsnick

By K.J. "Keiji" Karvonen

Bad book, Bad Book-What You Gonna Do?

There just aren't very many books around on anime and manga, so generally you'd want to welcome a new one. After all, every new publication is going to add to the body of accessible information about Japanese media, right?

In this case, **WRONG.**

SAMURAI FROM OUTER SPACE, written by Antonia Levi ought to be a good book. After all, if you read the author's bio, she **SHOULD** know what she's talking about:

According to the book, she's "lived in Japan on and off since the 1970's", participates in Anime internet discussions, and she supposedly did grad work in Tokyo and teaches Japanese history. Good credentials, right? Well, then why is it she doesn't seem to know what she's writing about?

On reading the book, I became suspicious when she describes anime fans as "Generation X" — a very debatable idea at best — unless, of course, you assume that "Generation X" covers a period of over 30 years! However, the **REAL** tip off occurs within the first 5 pages...on page 4, paragraph 1, to be specific:

"Streamline Pictures and Viz video, on the other hand, provide such excellent dubbing that the viewer forgets that the characters spoke anything but English."

These two companies, as everyone knows, do not do 'excellent' dubs. They don't even do good dubs. They do appalling dub jobs, work that ranges from a high point of uninspired hack work to virtual vandalism. This isn't just a matter of opinion: any informed comparison to the original work makes this abundantly clear.

Something else that is clear is that the author of this book hasn't done her homework; all the 'information' in this book is either second hand, or wrong, or both. She writes mainly about material that has been released in the U.S. already, so one becomes suspicious that she's never seen real anime in its original form at all. She makes statements that are so blatantly inaccurate that they seem to scream on the page:

"Osamu Tezuka did some interesting things in the 1960's and early 1970's. He didn't just create **Astro Boy** and **Kimba the White Lion**...." (Page 9).

No, Antonia: For your information, Tezuka created **TETSUWAN ATOMU** and **JUNGURU TAITEI**. **Astro Boy**

and **Kimba** were the creation of bad American dubbing, not the Kami of anime.

Also, she contradicts herself. She goes on at length about how one needn't be a student of Japan to enjoy anime, and then says just the opposite a few pages later. Which is it? It can't be both. Miss Levi gets names wrong (In **GALAXY EXPRESS 999**, it's **METAL**, not **MAYTEL**. Get it? She's a cyborg, she's made of metal). She makes inappropriate assumptions and conclusions based on mistaken observations: for example, **WINGS OF HONNEAMISE** does NOT occur on another planet (as Levi states). It's supposed to be an unrealized version of history (that's what that whole opening historical montage is for, to point that out). Where did she get the idea that it was a different planet? It's not in the movie, and it's not implied, either. I've interviewed the author of the screenplay of **WINGS** — I got it right from the horse's mouth. Levi is just plain wrong.

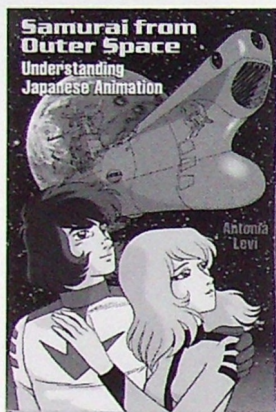
Miss Levi appears to have just made it up — like the rest of the 'facts' in this book. Note her observations of 'feminism'

in anime: she states, for example, that in **RANMA 1/2**, the character Akane cuts her hair short as an expression of her feminist individuality. As anyone who knows anything about anime knows, it just isn't so. Akane's hair was cut by accident during a fight between Ranma and Ryoga. For those of you who have never been to Japan, most Japanese either feel that 'feminism' is absurd — or don't even understand what it is! I've spent some time with some of the creators of the works Levi discusses, and I happen to know that Mr. Matsumoto (creator of **ORANGE ROAD**) is not a devotee of American feminist ideology, and neither is Rumiko Takahashi.

I could just go on and on, but I'd run out of room almost immediately. When I read this book, I started sticking a post-it in every time I spotted something inaccurate, misinterpreted, or just wrong. Before I ran out of post-its (around page 100), I had put in 75! A thorough and complete examination of what's wrong with this book would be longer than the book itself. And Levi didn't just write a bad book herself. In the "recommended reading" section she's also recommended other bad books (e.g. **SPEED TRIBES**), and suggests you read magazines that contain no information (hint: we're not talking about any magazine I write for). She also suggests you read magazines that don't even exist anymore: **ANIME FX** (which is referred in the text of **SAMURAI FROM OUTER SPACE** as **ANIME UK** with no explanation). **ANIME FX** has been gone for more than two years, and it's previous name, **ANIME UK** hasn't been used for even longer! For the good of your own knowledge, don't take Levi's word for anything!

Now, as you might have noticed (surprise, surprise!), The author of the book that I've been demolishing here is now working for this magazine. So, I had to go and listen her defend her work. Here's what she had to say:

"I think you have missed a major point about "Samurai," to wit, that it is literary criticism in the



postmodern deconstructionist style. That means, very specifically, NOT going by what the author says he thinks he meant."

No, Antonia, I didn't miss that, but I noticed that the title of this book includes the phrase "Understanding Japanese Animation". What Levi is doing here is just the opposite. She's obscuring the meaning of Japanese animation, and worse, replacing the meaning intended by the creators with her own. I just feel that passing off a book of criticism, which is merely an opinion, as an informational guide of Japanese animation has no validity at all.

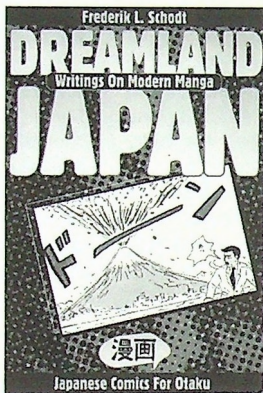
Further, Japanese animation, like other forms of expression, is an act of communication. The creators of these works are trying to say something; and it's these creators that have the one, final and unimpeachable right to define what it is that they are trying to say. This is probably why Miss Levy doesn't mind bad dubbing. After all, if you assume that a work means whatever you think it means (or want it to mean), then you immediately make it acceptable to replace their words with your own. That destroys the whole point of the watching anime. The point is to hear what the Japanese creators have to say to us, and by changing that you are throwing away the experience which you have been trying to acquire. Why bother to speak Japanese, why bother to try to translate, why bother to learn? it's so much easier to make up a meaning, isn't it?

One sure way to misinterpret the meaning of something created by a foreign culture is to insist on looking at it through the distorted lenses of ideology. Japan is an entirely different culture, so they don't feel the need to follow the cultural dogma of American liberal academics. It's just this kind of misinterpretation that I see as the main reason that this book is so erroneous. Instead of finding out from the creators themselves what their work is supposed to be about and what it's supposed to mean (there isn't one primary source in the whole darn thing), Antonia Levi has just tried to force Anime into the mold of her own ideology — bending it

wherever necessary to make it fit. Trying to bend the facts has merely resulted in the creation of a book that's twisted. Don't buy it.

And Now, A Reading From The Good Book

OK, you must be sick of me complaining about bad books that you shouldn't read. Now, how about a GOOD book that you SHOULD read? Ladies and gentlemen, a man who needs no introduction (but he's getting one anyway), Fred Schodt!



As you know, Fred's first book **MANGA MANGA!** has been somewhat of a bible for anime fans. Although Fred's specialty is manga (Japanese comics), since anime as an art grew from manga, you can learn a lot of

what you need to know about manga OR anime from this book.

The great thing about what Fred writes is that it is not only an enjoyable read, but it's also carefully researched. Fred has talked with many of the movers and shakers of manga (including the great Tezuka), and he is very careful not to make assertions unless he's checked them out. In other words, you can TRUST what he says.

And a new Testament has been added to **MANGA MANGA!** Hallelujah! Fred's new book, **DREAMLAND JAPAN: WRITINGS ON MODERN MANGA**, isn't just a sequel to **MANGA MANGA!** It expands on some of the subjects covered in the first book, and also covers material that wasn't covered in **MANGA MANGA!** You NEED this book! To give you an idea of how Fred's work is coveted, he sent me a galley copy to the office of

another magazine I work on. I never got it! The people in the office glommed it up, and I've never even seen it. Fred, some people just can't resist candy! I just wish they made a "graven on stone tablets" version!

The only flaw in this book is that in the fan section, Fred included a photo of one of the costumes I worked on, but not one of ME in a costume! I'm sure he'll fix this in later versions. So buy **DREAMLAND JAPAN** right now (those of you who haven't got it already). And if you haven't got **MANGA MANGA!**, you should be ashamed of yourself!

SUBBED VS. DUBBED

ANIMEIGO has one endearing quality: they have released some real fan classics, titles that took some real courage to put out. My favorite is **URUSEI YATSURA** TV series.

The first volume of the subtitled version of **UY** has been my benchmark for a great release: the translation was good, the timing was good, it's a classic title everyone should see. And **ANIMEIGO** even puts a page of interesting references ('liner notes') to give a taste of cultural education with each tape. Top drawer!

ANIMEIGO has since proceeded to put out lots more of the **UY** episodes. Great!

So, how does this look next to the dubbed version?

To begin from the beginning, the Japanese credits have disappeared from the opening titles, and been replaced by English titles. Also, the title of the show itself has been changed in its order. In the subtitled version, it's **URUSEI YATSURA** with **THOSE OBNOXIOUS ALIENS** in parentheses. In the dubbed version, it's the other

way around. By the way, for those of you who haven't studied Japanese, **THOSE OBNOXIOUS ALIENS** isn't a particularly good translation for **URUSEI YATSURA**. It also doesn't make a very good title, ei-



ther.

"URUSEI" means, literally, "noisy"! The way it's written in kanji for this show, the title is also a pun: "URU SEI" can mean "URU STAR" (Planet URU). "YATSURA" means a "gang", or a "mob". So, here are some ways it could have come out:

Planet Uru Gang Noisy Mob

Annoying Gang from Planet URU Annoying Aliens

Well, at least "ANNOYING ALIENS" certainly would have worked better than **THOSE OBNOXIOUS ALIENS!** The dubbed version's lines come out different, too — and not for the better. For example, a line that is translated in the sub version as "Look out! It's gonna hit you" is changed to, "Hey, fool, look out! It's gonna hit ya!". How many people do you know that would say this? It sounds just as stilted as it reads. I realize that there needed to be changes made to the translation...after all, one is to be read, the other to be heard. The odd thing is, though, that the lines that **NEEDED** to be changed *weren't*, and the lines that didn't need to be changed, *were!*

And now, a word about the voice acting. Well, this tends to be the weakest part of a dub job. The strange thing about the **UY** dub is that some of the hardest voices were done the best. I would have thought that they wouldn't be able to find someone that could sound anything like Fumi Hirano (LUM), but as far as the voice itself, Martha Ellen Senseney did great. Keeping that in mind, where did heck did the French accent come from? Perhaps a strange accent was in order, but *French*? Extremely weird choice there, Robert!

Unfortunately, bad voices were so bad that the good ones get buried. Ataru sounds like Shaggy from **SCOOBY DOO**. Mr. Invader (this one **SHOULD** have been a cinch) sounds like a muppet! Where did **THAT** come from? According to Robert Woodhead, "It was attempt to come out with something similar to the voice, but to come out with something equivalently weird." Well, Bob, don't do that! Carl Macek liked to do that, and it didn't work then, either!

I guess Robert Woodhead realizes that this approach is wrong, too. He continued, "It turned out that some of the things we tried as experiments didn't work

as well as we hoped. We liked them, but nobody else did!" You know, this is the first time I can remember ANY producer of dubbed material ever admitted being wrong about a dub job. Even if you didn't like the Animeigo dub of **UY TV**, at least Robert Woodhead is willing to admit his mistakes! Besides, the **UY** dub is no worse than the majority of dubbed anime out there, and better than many.

The **UY** dub is an interesting case for another reason. You see, historically people like **VIZ** and **STREAMLINE** have had one excuse for dubbing: they claim dubbed tapes **SELL** more, and since they want to make a huge profit, dubbing is where it's at. They back this up by saying that when they put out dual versions, they dubbed one sells more. Does this really indicate dubbing is the way to go?

Well, the problem here is that they have always been rigging the figures. They tend to put out the dub version first, market it more, make it as much as 30%

CHEAPER than the subbed version, and **PUSH** the dubbed version with all their distributors. So, **OF COURSE** the dubbed version sells more!

So, did the **UY** dub sell better? Not in this case. According to Robert Woodhead, "The subtitled version sold better".

This is a real indication of where the trend in anime is actually going. It's clear that the majority of fans prefer the subtitled versions of anime, with the original voice actors. Robert Woodhead seems to agree, commenting: "For things that are more fan related, more popular with the fan base, the subtitle will sell better."

It would seem that the "general audience" that the dubbed versions were originally produced for is becoming a more educated "fan audience"...one that finds American voice dubbing to be lacking. Carl Macek, the king of bad dubbing himself, has recently quit doing it. Apparently, he doesn't think dubbing has much of a future. Let's hope that he's right!



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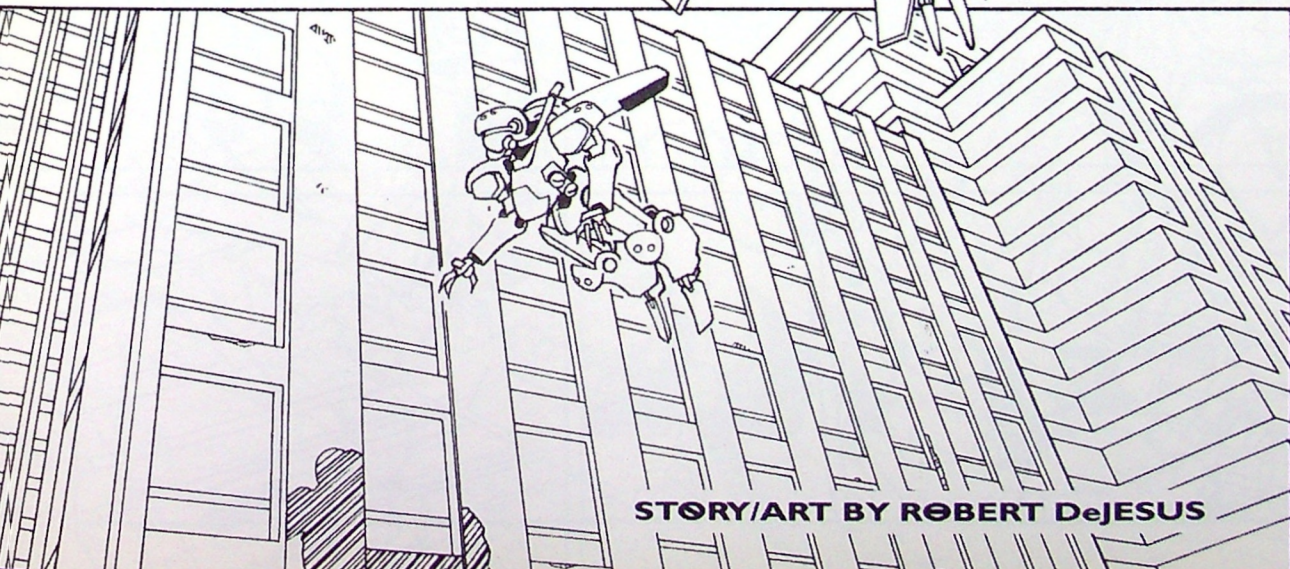
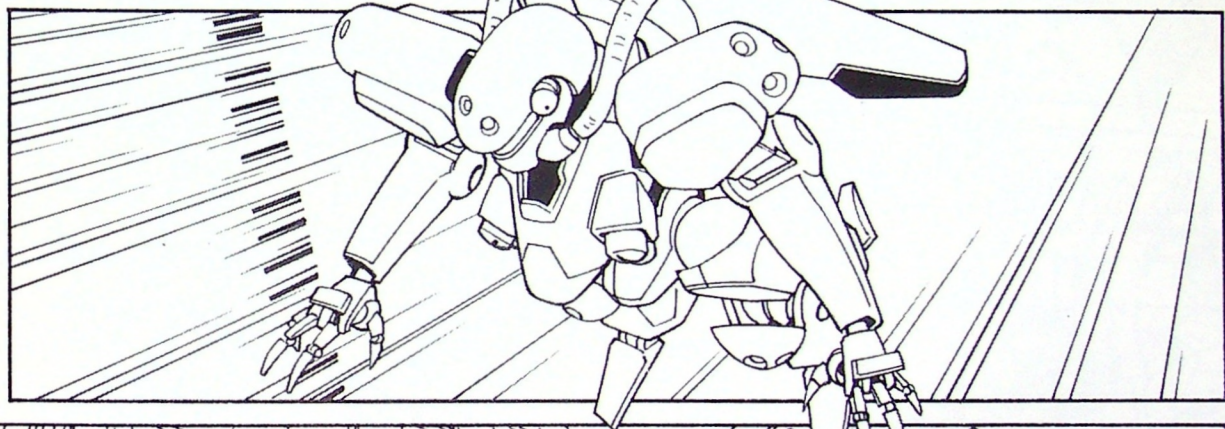
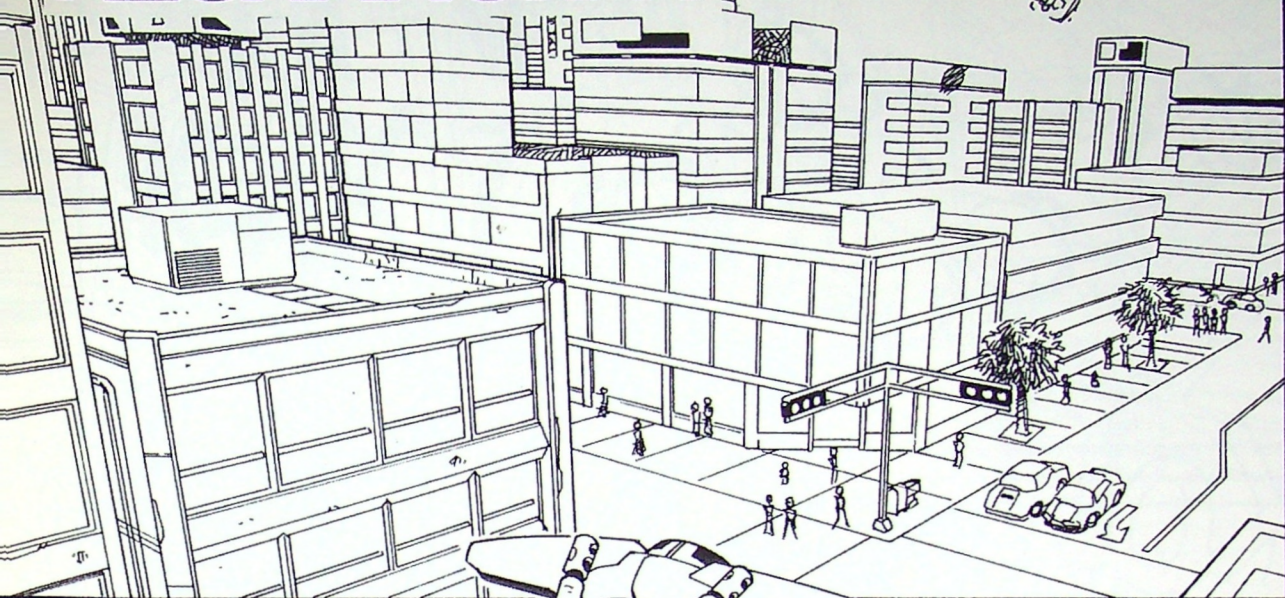
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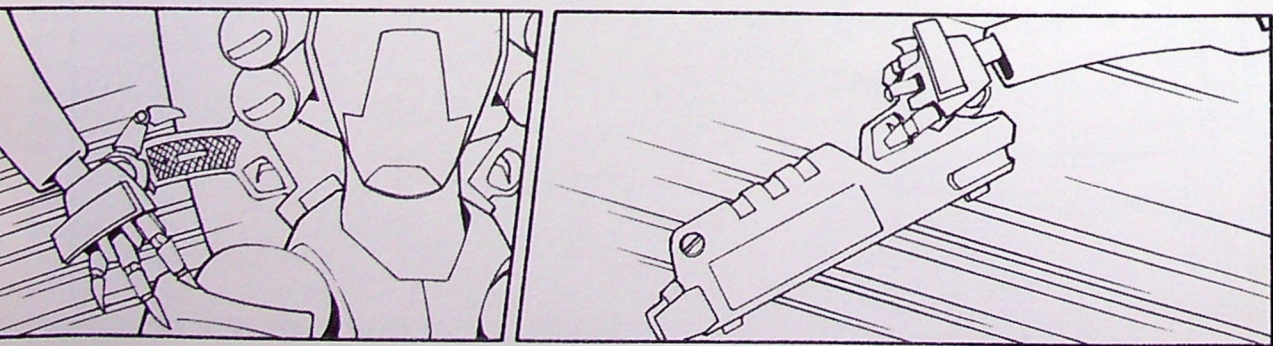
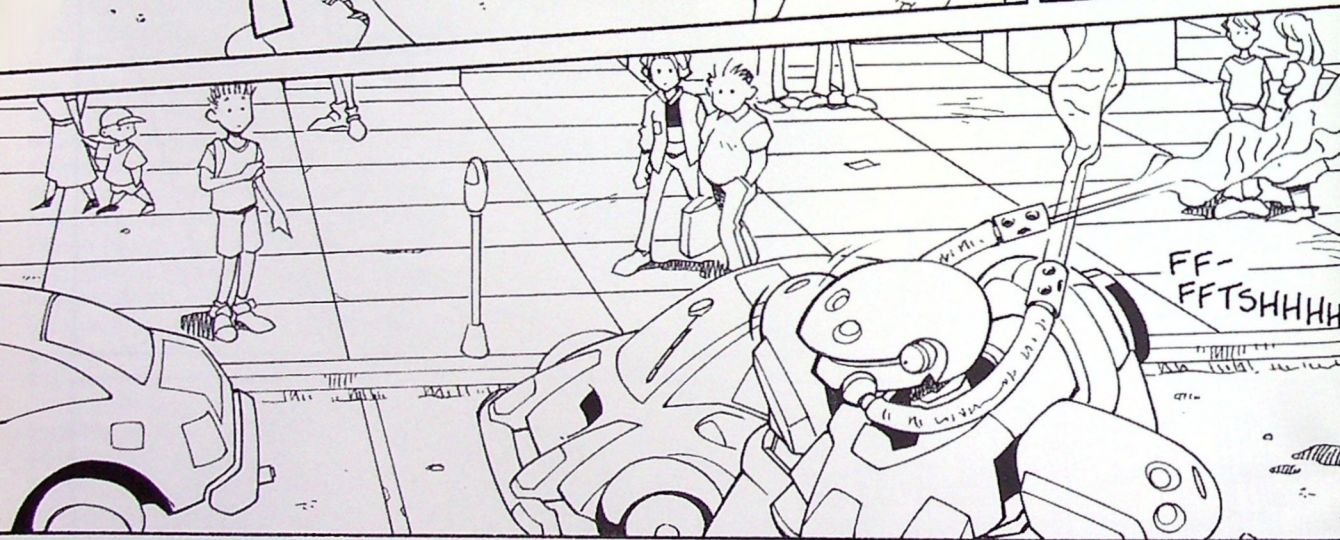
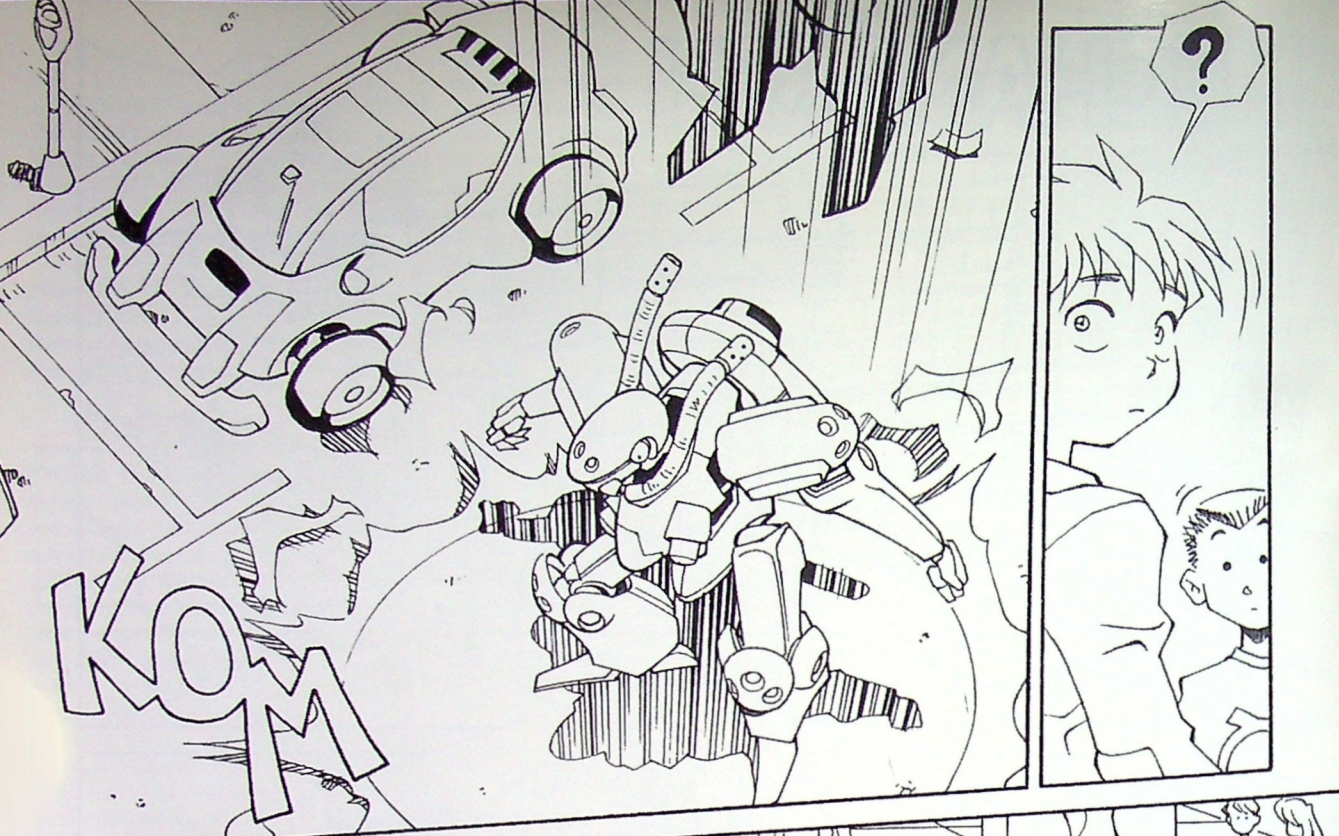
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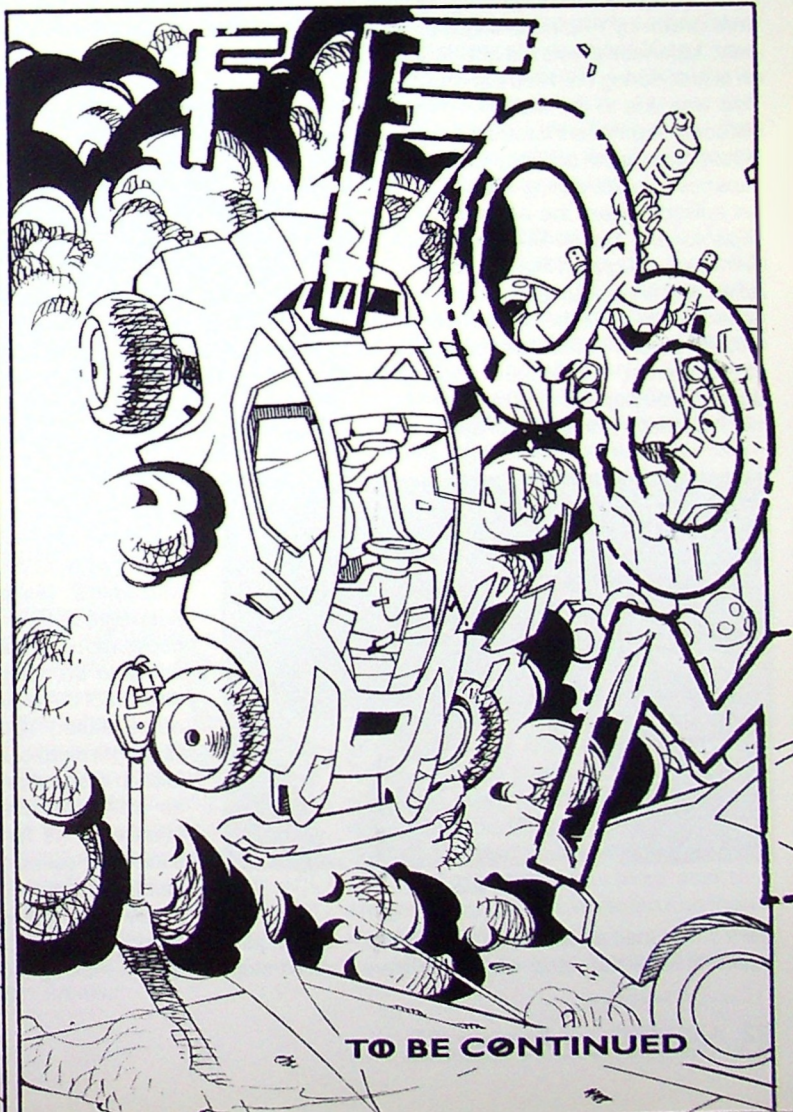
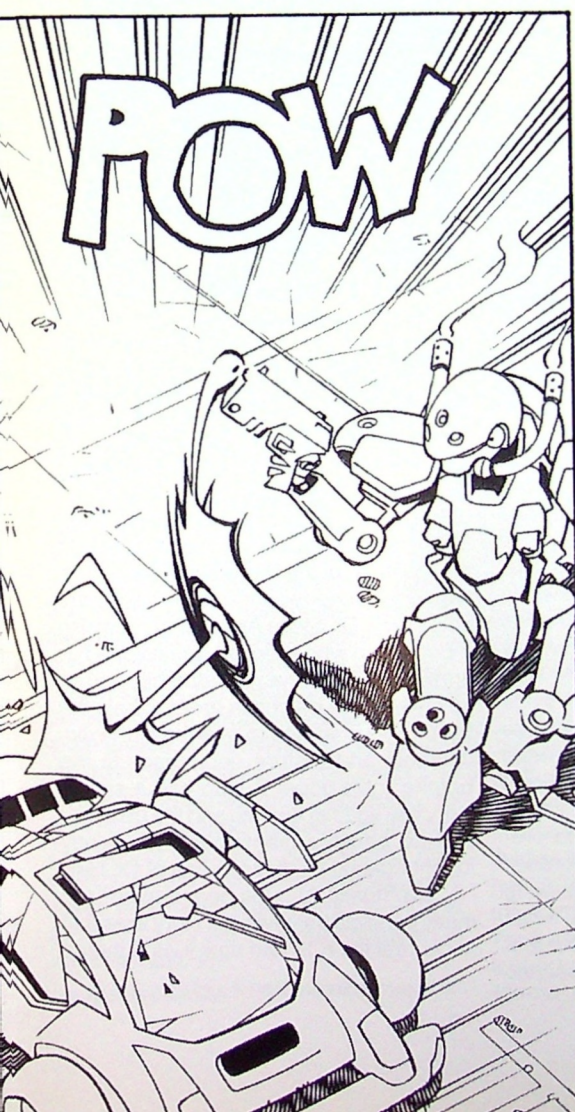
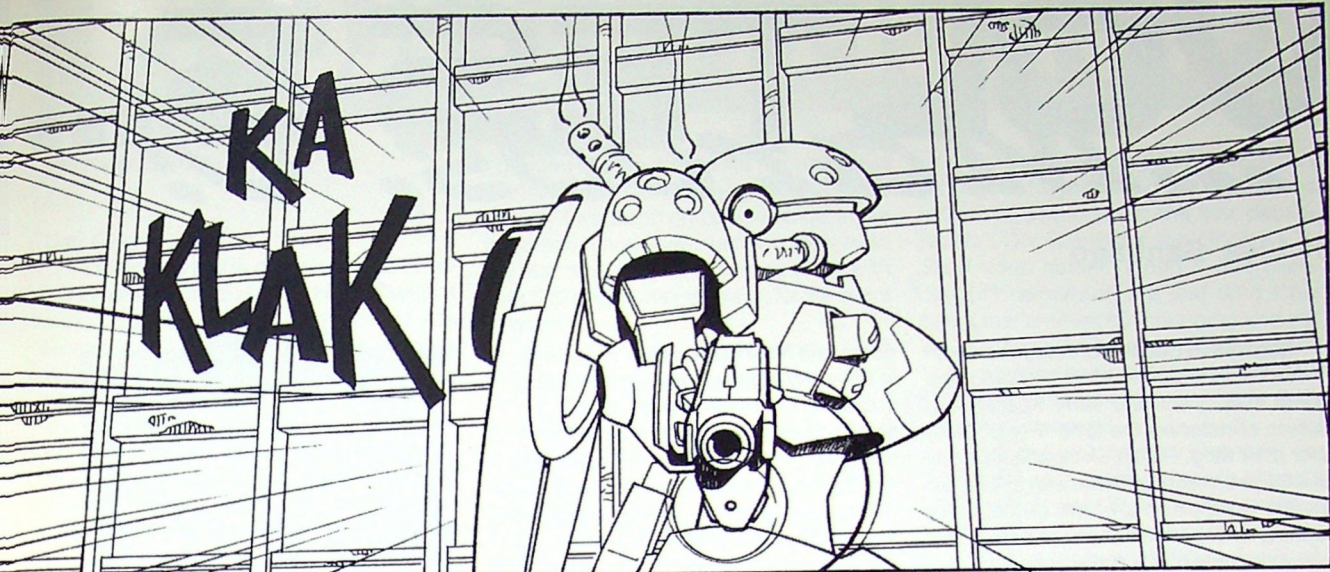
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STORY/ART BY ROBERT DeJESUS





TO BE CONTINUED

VOLTES 5... ...Marcos, O!...

by Lisa Santiago

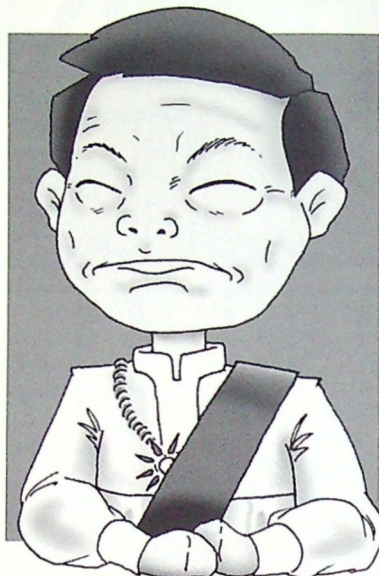
Located in Southeast Asia, this chain of islands has been called "Pearl Of the Orient Seas", and the early Spanish explorers christened the land "Philippines" after their king, Phillip. A Spanish colony for 400 years and an American colony for 50, the Philippines are one of the major centers for Japanese anime in Asia today. Toei animation has a major animation studio here, and some Dragonball episodes were drawn by Filipino animators. Ironically, Japanese anime did not really catch on at first, during the 1960's and early 70's. This was due to the fact that there was still some resentment toward the Japanese in response to the occupation by Imperial Japanese troops during WWII. The earliest episodes were the American dubbed *Gigantor* and *Marine Boy* shows, but neither really caught on like they did in other Asian countries. But then something happened in mid-1978 that would change this attitude toward anime forever: the arrival of two shows, *Voltes 5* and *Mazinger Z*. Both proved popular almost overnight, so much so that a whole slew of anime shows

doing and flock to watch the two shows in the early evening. Both shows were dubbed in English; however, many of the voice actors were Filipino natives who spoke English as a second language.

The merchandising alone for these two shows reached the profit margin of millions of pesos, and thousands of Filipino fans would line up in stores just to buy the records of the Japanese theme songs. Many of these theme songs remained in their native Japanese, but the Filipino public liked it so much that it didn't matter that they couldn't understand a single word. Despite the fact that the two shows were about giant robots, the engaging soap opera story line attracted a wide female audience, and eventually more women watched the show than men.

To this day, many viewers who saw *Voltes V* and *Mazinger Z* during the heyday of 1978-1979 would recall it with nostalgia. Because of its overwhelming popularity, there was even talk by the middle of 1979 that the Japanese companies had actually seriously considered making a special episode in the style of the "Thrilla In Manila" ultimate fight, with *Voltes V* vs. *Mazinger Z*. (Alas, the ultimate fight between the two super robots would never come to be, for the-then dictator of the country had other plans.)

Countless copyright pirates also tried to cash in on the two shows as well, and one group even went as far to produce a so-called *Voltes V* theme song in the Tagalog dialect, then claimed it was an official translation. (It wasn't, but that didn't stop them from making thousands



Ferdinand Marcos

of pesos off of the public.)

What ultimately proved amusing was that the then dictator President Ferdinand Marcos eventually saw it as a threat to his rule and had it banned from the airwaves. The story of *Voltes V* was that a brave crew of five mecha pilots commanded a powerful transformable giant robot that fought the injustices of the Bolzanian Empire. The creator/engineer/scientist of the transformable mech, Dr. Steve Armstrong, was also a Bolzanian who rebelled against the tyranny of the Bolzanian dictatorship, and so he created the mecha in order to help the Earth. (His goal was to overthrow the dictatorship and restore democracy to the Empire.) *Mazinger Z* also had a similar story line against tyrants, and the pilot, Koji Kabuto and his giant robot constantly fought against the evil tyranny of Dr. Hell.

Eventually, Marcos began to see too many parallels between the story lines and to his real life rule and saw it as a threat,



VOLTES V

were introduced as a result. Children and adults alike would stop what they were

and didn't stop them from making thousands

continued on page 35

PROJECT: A-KON #8

by Roger O'Connor

Day One

Driving up to the glass-covered building in a business district of North Dallas, I wasn't quite sure if this was the hotel I was looking for. Then I saw a couple of guys walking through the parking lot wearing bluejeans and tee shirts with anime style characters on them. Nowadays that might not be so unusual, but these were not "normal" anime tee shirts. They were tee shirts only a hard-core anime fan would wear: last year's Project A-Kon tee shirt. It seems I had reached my destination.

Since I couldn't get away from work until Friday afternoon, I was arriving later than I had wanted to. And as soon as I walked in, I could see that things had gotten well under way without me. There were tables lining the main halls with artists and others talking to all the passers by. I looked for the dealer's room and it was very easy to find. It was the one that everyone was yelling about being "thrown out" of because it was closing.

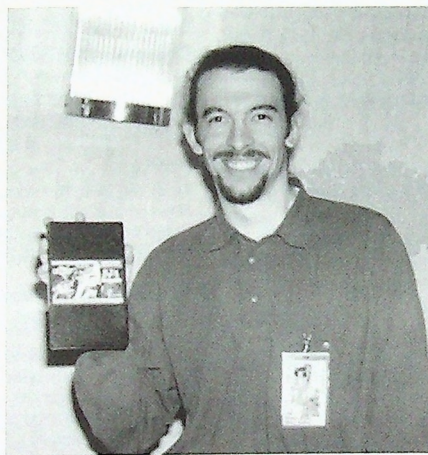
Looking at my watch, I saw it was already seven o'clock. Damn that Dallas traffic. I rushed over to the registration desk and picked up my pre-registration packet. I quickly dug inside and got my full-color "cool con badge" and stuck it to my shirt tail and tried to slip into the dealer's room.

I soon found out that A-Kon security takes their job very seriously. Let's just say that I didn't get into the dealer's room that night. So I dug back into my packet and looked at the "Kon" guide book. The full color cover by Steve Bennett was good, but not terrific. I like Steve's art style (read: I like his cute, top heavy girls), but better printing on the cover would have done it more justice. Otherwise, the guide book was top notch. The A-Kon staff treats their work with the utmost professionalism, but without any pseudo-righteous stuffiness. The kind of treatment you'd expect from somebody who really knew what they were doing. Which after eight years running this con and others like it, I would imagine the A-Kon people do.

The guide book had the nice map that

I needed to help me locate the room that the "Welcome Ceremony" was going to be held in. I went and grabbed a snack at the ice-cream shop downstairs on the way to the standing-room only packed room with over 500 people sitting waiting for the event to begin.

I didn't have long to wait. Meri Hazzlewood, the con chairman, introduced all of the guests and presented them with various welcome gifts. The most impressive gift was the fifth of J.D. that Steve Bennett and Kuni Kimura slammed down right on stage. Amanda Winn, voice actress for A.D. Visions, and Scott Frazier and Hiroyuki Kitakubo of Studio I.G. were given gifts and then the terrible tale of the A-Kon tee shirts was told. In the end, Mr. Kitakubo was gracious enough to entirely



Shawn the Touched

re-do the artwork for the tee shirt. It wouldn't be until the next day that the tee shirts were delivered. A truly amazing feat in itself if you ask me.

Then the lights were dimmed and while every one was waiting for the 20 foot projection TV screen to come to life, they started shining the little flashlight keyrings that came in the pre-registration packets. Just as a couple of guys were figuring out how to do shadow puppets on the wall, the screen flared to life with White Radish Production's, *The Item*. It was followed by a short animated promo for Ben Dunn's, *Warrior Nun Areala*.

And then we saw what I consider to be the most significant piece of Japanese animation produced in the last decade: Studio I.G.'s opening to the *Ghost In The Shell* video game. When it was over, I couldn't remember the last time I had heard that amount of screaming and yelling and downright thunderous applause. The animation and production techniques used in this short piece just have to be seen to be believed.

After the welcoming ceremony was over, there were many parties to attend, a few of which were even announced during the ceremony. Others could be found by looking at the bulletin board especially set up to post such things.

A few hours and as many parties later, after performing my patented "Can I Feel My Nose" sobriety test, I walked out to my car and drove home. As near as I could figure it, I was going to get five hours sleep before the dealer room opened the next morning.

Day Two - Part One

When I got to the con the next morning, the dealer room had already been open for about an hour. I was starting to feel like there would be absolutely nothing left to buy considering how many people there were.

I shouldn't have been worried. The dealer room was packed, yes—with dealers. My personal quest was for an original animation cel. Every anime con I go to, I buy a cel of one of my favorite female anime characters. Since I don't like to spend over 50 bucks for a cel, the choices are often somewhat limited. But I had quite a few to choose from this time.

Generally, the available merchandise was quite diverse. Sure there was beaucoup *Sailor Moon* and *Ranma* and *Evangelion*, but there was also plenty of stuff from less known shows like *Sabre Marionette* and *Metal Fighter Miku*. Actually, I'd be willing to bet that if you'd named a show off of the top of your head, chances are there would be some related merchandise for sale at A-Kon.

After I had blown my money, I went to

continued on page 35

But We

Christina: Eh, hey gang, and welcome to yet another episode of Let's Go Fishing — uh — I mean, But We Digress. =) Sorry Wen, it's summer and my brain is fried. With no school and bee-yoo-tee-ful days in glorious abundance, I've been doing the outdoorsy thang as much as possible. But I ran out of sunscreen a few days ago... anybody want to buy a tamagotchi from me? [No, please *take* mine! — Ed.] Just to support the Keep Christina From Frying Her Split-Ended Hair Into an Afro Fund? Heh heh heh...

Wendell: For those of you not in the know, 'Let's Go Fishing' is a local show that's been around for *quite* awhile...

Being outdoors is a good thing indeed! So anyone want to help buy Christina a hat? Although, an Afro might be a good change of pace... ;^)

Christina: "pthhhpt" Seriously, though, tamagotchi-s have apparently become the latest craze here. have you seen the prices they've been selling for, like in the papers and on the Net? We're talking from \$40-200. Yeesh, scalpers. The Japanese can't get enough of them, either. Wonder how long that'll last. (Maybe this fad'll be gone by the time this mag gets distributed.)

Wendell: Tamagotchi is certainly popular here in Hawai'i too! I saw a TV newspot where there little things sold out in 1 day at one store here!

Christina: Yup, yup, I just got word that people are standing in line for 3 hours in Hong Kong for them, too. And locally, Liberty House carries the little buggers, and so does Longs Drugs, and KC Martial Arts Supply, and God knows where else. In my humble opinion, though, anyone who pays more than \$20-25 is just getting ripped off. I'd rather have a pet lion, myself. Speaking of lions, in a not-so-subtle transition...

Wendell: Ah, let's see... and pulling something out of the 'news' bag here and we have: a little bit about the new *Jungle Emperor* movie! Seems that it was no empty threat that Tezuka Studios did indeed have this on the drawing board. *Jungle Emperor* will be in Japanese theaters this coming August. Hopefully, this one'll show up here in the US soon.

Christina: I bought a bunch of \$4 *Jungle Emperor* videos from Borders Books and Music few weeks ago. It's amazing to think how long that particular anime's been around. I actually cringed at the "primitive" state animation was in back then.

Wendell: I have it on good authority that the animation & character designs are way updated from the old days. However, I bought a few of those too and while the animation was "primitive", the stories are not. In one show lot of people die, and not just the villains.

Christina: Wheel! Death! Blood! Gore! *salivating* Woops, better get a hold of myself. ^_^ In another movie note, has anyone noticed the similar "feel" between creation scenes in *Ghost in the Shell* and the *5th Element*? Here's an explanation for that:

From: pxi_cwby@ix.netcom.com (Sean C. Cunningham)
Newsgroups: rec.arts.anime.misc
Subject: Re: Fifth Element/GITS
Date: 27 May 1997 01:29:22 GMT

In article <5m400d\$imi@ocean.CAM.ORG> emru@CAM.ORG (Emru Townsend) wrote:

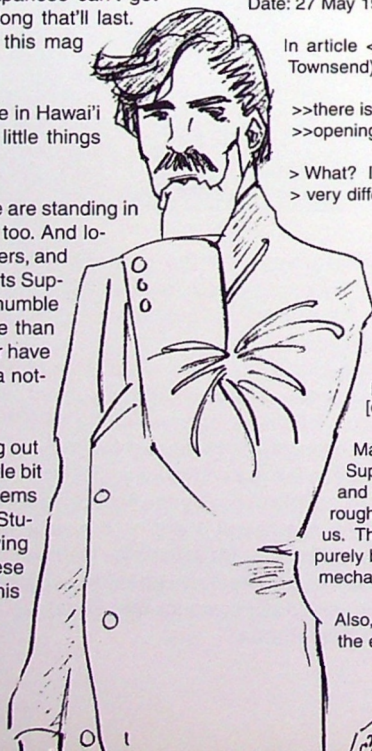
>>there is a scene where they reconstruct a girl. It is VERY close to the:
>>opening of "Ghost in the Shell".:

> What? It's not close at all. The idea is similar, but the execution is
> very different.

Yes, the execution was very different, but there was a definite influence there. There are influences from all over throughout 5th. I was the sequence supervisor for the "Leeloo [female lead] Escapes" and "Cab Chase" sequences (66 shots panning from her escape to the ledge of the reconstruction building to Korben and Leeloo's escape from the cops in the fog) and was lucky enough to be in on the pre-visualization that started over at Pinewood while Luc [director??] was still in the middle of first unit shooting.

Mark Stetson, VFX Supervisor, and Karen Goulekas, DFX Supervisor, had compiled a "just like" reel based on the boards and breakdowns for 5th. Part of the "just like" library was a rough-cut for GITS. If it didn't influence Luc it certainly influenced us. Though the "Leeloo Reconstruction" sequence was creating a purely biological form whereas the titles to GITS were creating a mechanical form.

Also, having the GITS footage around made sure we didn't make the effects TOO much alike. The whole idea for what was to take



Diagress

ANIME AND THE INTERNET

Christina Chun

place existed before anyone had ever seen the *GitS* footage, though.

I don't know if Luc has ever seen *GitS* or any other anime (though I have read that some manga [Eds. note: it was *Sanctuary*] was spotted in Korben's [male lead] apartment). Having just attended the Cannes film festival I can say that anime and manga are quite popular over there. Nearly every newstand had some anime/manga magazines and in the little town of Mandelou (sic) that we were staying at just outside of Cannes there was a nice little Playstation/Saturn/Anime/Manga boutique.

Wendell: In case, any of you haven't heard already Disney has worldwide (except Asia) distribution for the following shows (according to the Miyazaki Mailing list):

Kaze no Tani no Nausicaa (Nausicaa of the Valley of Wind),
Tenkū no Shiro Lapyuta (Laputa: The Castle in the Sky),
Tonari no Totoro (My Neighbor Totoro),
Majo no Takkyubin (Kiki's Delivery Service),
Omohide Poroporo (Only Yesterday),
Kurenai no Buta (Porco Rosso),
Heisei Tanuki Gassen Pom Poko (Pom Poko),
Mimi o Sumaseba (Whisper of the Heart).

Christina: Disney's distributing PORCO ROSSO??!! I think I'm happy about that news. Disney's got the money to make sure Miyazaki's animes get good distribution — and dare we hope? — advertising. Porco Rosso — alias Marco — is my main MAN! Or pig, as that were. He's so cool. I even have a stuffed chibi Porco doll that hangs right by my plush P-chan keychain. Had to stick them on the wall since I have no space in my room. => I can't wait to see Porco in his Disney incarnation. =>

Wendell: Want to check out a real cool manga site? Dial this into your web browser: <http://www.cybermanga.com>; this has some manga done by Pros and semi-Pros from Japan and even a few pin-ups by a few folks from the US and other countries.

Christina: Hm, interesting. I'll have to check that site out. => In the meantime, for any wanna-be manga artists, here's a little something that's been floating around for the past few days. Who knows, it might be worth

looking into:

From: ontargetcom@aol.com (OnTargetCom)
Newsgroups: rec.arts.anime
Subject: MANGA STYLE ARTIST WANTED!
Date: 27 May 1997 15:29:28 GMT

Nifty Comics is looking for a Japanese/manga style artist for a new online and CD-Rom comic. Send samples to:

Nifty Comics attn: Mat Nastos 1728 E. 115th St., #5 Cleveland, OH 44106
Email: niftycomics@geocities.com or mnastos@hotmail.com

Feel free to email us for more info.

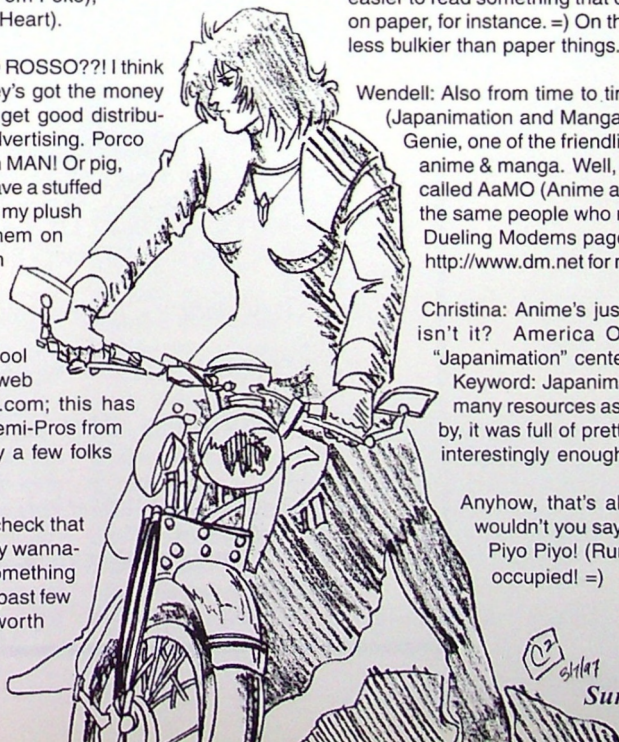
Wendell: Sounds interesting! Could end up being the US equivalent to COMIC ON, in Japan a popular CD-ROM comic in Japan.

Christina: Never really liked CD-ROM style comics myself, though. It's easier to read something that doesn't glow at you — that's printed on paper, for instance. => On the other hand, CD-ROMs are much less bulkier than paper things...

Wendell: Also from time to time, I might have mentioned JaMO (Japanimation and Manga Online), the online anime club on Genie, one of the friendlier places to stop by and chat about anime & manga. Well, now it's got an Internet counterpart called AaMO (Anime and Manga Online)! It's being run by the same people who run JaMO on Genie. Check out the Dueling Modems page (where AaMO is based off of) at: <http://www.dm.net> for more details on how to join in AaMO!

Christina: Anime's just spreading its wings everywhere, isn't it? America Online has recently built a new "Japanimation" center for their customers. [Eds. note: Keyword: Japanimation] It probably doesn't have as many resources as JaMO does, but last time I stopped by, it was full of pretty graphics (a lot from *Lodoss War*, interestingly enough).

Anyway, that's all from my end, so that's a wrap, wouldn't you say, Wendell? Oh — hey — look, it's a Piyo Piyo! (Run while our readers are occupied! =>)



6/1/97



WHAT'S THIS? by Eric Kihara

A guide to Japanese Animation Society of Hawai'i's Programming

Hi! Is everyone enjoying their summer? Well, it's back to school soon, so try not to get too depressed. To help you get through these hard times, we've got some humorous shows to give you a smile.

Natsuki Crisis

Here's a great back to school show. If you thought you had problems at school, that's nothing compared to Natsuki, who has people challenging her to fights all the time. In the first episode, Natsuki meets a new transfer student, Lina. In part two of the show, the story involves a girl who is sent to punish Lina for leaving the gang that she was part of. Naturally, Natsuki gets involved and there are some impressive fight scenes.

Fam & Irlie

Far in the future when civilization has collapsed and magic is reborn (sound familiar?), there are those that search the ruins of the past for valuables. Fam & Irlie are two of these treasure hunters. In this adventure they are looking for a source of ultimate power. Of course they aren't the only ones who are after the power, but that won't stop them, right? Right?

Marmalade Boy

Speaking of problems at school, we continue the story of Miki who is trying to keep her home life from being known at school. After all, having her parents get divorced to marry another couple who are getting divorced for the same reason isn't something you can easily explain to your friends.

DNA2

Even worse than Miki's problems are poor Junta's. Junta is trying to get through as best he can while dealing with fatherhood (did I say fatherhood? Well, yes but not what you think).

Megami Paradise

As referred to by our esteemed president, this video is overflowing with pulchritude. It's eye candy with an amusing story (or at least the beginning of one). I'm not going to say any more because this has already been reviewed (and if you don't have that issue, shame on you).

Campus Guardess

This is a hilarious story about a schoolgirl named Hasumi who is going to a very unusual school. To make matters even worse, she is in love with her brother (who isn't really her brother but then HE doesn't know that and she does). We're showing all three parts of this and it is *funny!*

JASH Programming Schedule Fall 1997

August

Natsuki Crisis
DNA²
Megami Paradise
Marmalade Boy

September

Marmalade Boy
Campus Guardess
DNA²
Natsuki Crisis
Fam & Irlie

October

Vampire Princess Miyu
Fam & Irlie
Marmalade Boy
Capt. Tylor
DNA²

Cool stuff coming soon!

97 - 08/08

RANMA 1/2 MOVIE CD VOL. 2; Music CD, Viz; 19 tracks; 37 min.; \$16.95

97 - 08/12

LONE WOLF AND CUB-Baby Cart In The Land of Demons; LD - Subtitled - [Live Action]; AnimEigo; Unrated; Widescreen Collector's Edition; CLV; 89 min.; \$39.95

RAZOR-Who's Got The Gold?; LD -Sub- [Live Action]; AnimEigo; Unrated; Widescreen Collector's Edition; CLV; 84 min.; \$39.95

97 - 08/15

DETONATOR ORGUN v. 1; Hybrid CD-ROM; Software Sculptors; 60 min.

DETONATOR ORGUN v. 2; Hybrid CD-ROM; Software Sculptors; 50 min.

DETONATOR ORGUN v. 3; Hybrid CD-ROM; Software Sculptors; 55 min.

97 - 10/10

KEY THE METAL IDOL: VOCAL DATA DISC; Music CD; Viz; 36 tracks; 60 min.; \$16.95

RANMA 1/2 CAPPUCINO MUG; 14-ounce capacity ceramic mug; Viz; \$16.95

"You know you've been in Japan too long when you fully understand the deeper significance of cuteness." At least, that's what we used to say when I lived in Japan and played the "you know you've been in Japan too long when..." game.

I'm not sure I ever felt I'd been in Japan too long. I know I never fully understood the deeper significance of cuteness. I

the Deeper Significance of Cuteness

did, however, come to appreciate how deeply it permeates the society. From the yearly crop of mis-named *talentos* [teen celebrities, usually without much talent except for being cute], to the beckoning cats in restaurants and stores, to the round-bottomed *Darumas* and other charms available at temples and shrines, to the condoms, vibra-

tors and other sex toys decorated with cartoon characters and smiling woodland critters on sale in Kabuki-cho [Eds. note: red light district, in Shinjuku], cuteness is everywhere. The culture of cuteness is not new. In the museums, you can find evidences of past cuteness in the prehistoric clay *haniwa* statues, the 12th-century scrolls of anthropomorphic animals, or the cleverly carved *netsuke* from the Tokugawa era. If you live in Japan long enough, you start to take cuteness for granted. I realized that when newly arrived friends from the States became hysterical at the sight of my bicycle, a pastel pink cutie with a purple carrier featuring a

picture of adorably entwined cartoon penguins and the slogan, "WE ARE A HOT COUPLE." After years in Japan, I looked like a normal bike to me.

If you watch *anime* long enough, you also start to take cuteness for granted. With very few exceptions, most *anime* contain some element of cuteness. That's no accident. Cuteness is what lends *anime* a lot of its distinctive character.

Cuteness is not the same thing as being funny, although cuteness and humor are related. Nor is it the same thing as beauty or sex appeal, although it contains elements of both. Cuteness is the art of being attractive and amusing in a way that emphasizes smallness, innocence, sincerity and vulnerability. Small animals are cute by definition, although that doesn't stop *anime* artists from making them cuter still. Human cuteness is usually restricted to the young or occasionally the very old. Middle-age is NOT cute. Neither is being too cute; too cute characters like Ran in *Urusei Yatsura* or Azusa in *Ranma* are usually hiding some fairly uncute characteristics.

Cuteness can be wildly funny, especially if it is carried to extremes. In *Dragon Half*, for example, already cute characters change to the even cuter super-deformed [toddlerlike versions of themselves with squashed faces] mode to highlight each punch line, sort of a visual rimshot. *Ranma* does something similar with already cute characters who change into even cuter animals or, of course, the opposite sex.

More frequently, however, cuteness operates less directly to moderate emotional situations which would otherwise drown out everything else. One of the charms of *anime* is its refusal to allow you to feel any one emotion exclusively at any one time. The mark of good

anime is its ability to make you feel two or more emotions, often conflicting emotions, at the same time. Cuteness helps with that by presenting the same emotions in a

lighter touch. That's not quite the same as comic relief which follows a heavy scene with a lighter moment, amusing

one. In *anime*, the cuteness usually occurs at the same time as the heavy stuff.

When the arrogant Ayeka breaks down over the loss of her spaceship in *Tenchi Muyo!*, for example, the viewer is asked to feel her pain and, at the same time, remember that this is a comedy. The

wildly exaggerated geysers that erupt from Ayeka's eyes help with this, but the real factor that prevents tragedy, or at least sorrow, from dominating the scene, is the arrival of some major league cuteness in the form of Ryo-Ohki, a genetically engineered life form who combines all the cutest

aspects of cat and rabbit with large, glistening *anime* eyes. Ryo-Ohki could be used simply as comic relief, but she isn't. Instead, she falls in with the mood of sorrow and loss by trying to comfort Ayeka. Indeed, Ryo-Ohki's own innocence and vulnerability highlight the more painful aspects of the situation that Ayeka is too arrogant and too whiny to fully reveal. At the same time, Ryo-Ohki's silly appearance and cat-rabbit postures are irresistibly funny; Ayeka herself finally gives in and laughs at Ryo-Ohki's antics. The result is a scene in which the viewer can laugh at Ayeka without being at all unsympathetic to her plight.

Cuteness can also add a lighter touch to terror. It's no accident that many supernatural *anime* contain so many cute characters.

Some go further and present characters

TONI-CHAN EXPLAINS IT ALL

By Antonia Levi



The Cast of 'Ah, My Goddess!'



Ryo-Ohki...



...cuteness incarnate

who might otherwise be terrifying, as infant versions of themselves. Babies, like small, furry animals, are cute by definition, and many supernatural anime use "babification" to downplay the terror of some characters. This is done very directly in *Zenki* where the *miko* heroine uses a captive demon lord to fight evil. She controls Zenki by turning him into a child whenever he is not needed to fight. A good thing too. If Zenki were allowed to remain in his demon lord form all the time, he would not only be uncontrollable, but a lot more threatening than is really consistent with the tone of the series.

The same is true in the portrayal of Lord Enma in *Yu Yu Hakusho*, a series in which he oversees a prematurely dead teen and his friends as they fight evil in several dimensions. Lord Enma, the judge of souls in Hell, is usually a fairly grim character; check out his appearance in *Judge*. Lord Enma isn't actually evil. Judging souls is just his job, but playing him for laughs presents some problems. *Yu Yu Hakusho* gets around this by replacing Enma with his son, Koenma or "Enma, Jr." Floating in mid-air with a pacifier in his mouth, Koenma fulfills his father's duties well enough for plot purposes, but without adding a grim note. Koenma is too cute to be grim.

Romantic comedies use cuteness to moderate the portrayal of sexual desire. The popularity of these love stories among supposedly cynical American viewers lies in their ability to recreate the often conflicting sensations of first love, particularly its mix of lust and innocence. That's not easy to do. Sexual desire is obviously an important factor in young love, but if it becomes too dominant, the result is pornography. Leaving it out, on the other hand, is dull and unrealistic.

The American media has never dealt well with young love. In the 1950s and early '60s, TV sitcoms and movies captured the innocence of teens in love, but only by pretending that the protagonists were numb from the waist down. Then, in the late '60s, America discovered that

teens are sexual beings, and soon the sound of heavy breathing drowned out all other emotions and interests, at least in the media. More recently, in the '90s, TV sitcoms have tried to moderate the dominance of sex with brittle repartee. The result is teens and twenty-somethings who quip their way through their first love

affairs like bored, 40-year-old sexual sophists. The result is that the dominance of sexual desire, but without restoring the innocence.

In anime, cuteness renders sex more manageable without in any way reducing its power. Cuteness has its own sexual qualities provided it's not carried too far. *Oh, My Goddess!*, the story of a college student in love with a Norse goddess, virtually spells out the relationship of sex and cuteness by presenting three sister goddesses: Urd the ultra-sexy, Skuld the ultra-cute, and Belldandy who is just right.

Maison Ikkoku does much the same thing by contrasting Kyoko, the young widowed landlady of a rundown boarding house, with her more obviously sexy tenant, Akemi. It's no contest. Kyoko in her "piyo-piyo" apron is much sexier than Akemi will ever be in her slutty nighties. But it's a different kind of sexuality, one that allows Kyoko to remain a person with conflicting needs and desires of her own. Her sex-appeal does not cancel out every other quality she possesses, not even in Godai's bedazzled eyes. She is undoubtedly the object of his sexual desire, but she's too cute to be just a sex object.

In romantic comedies, cuteness usually lies in small, everyday gestures that reveal the feelings of the characters. These are seldom outright funny and sometimes are not even amusing. In the big break-up scene between Hikaru and Kyosuke in *Kimagure Orange Road*, for



Kyoko of *Maison Ikkoku*

example, Hikaru responds to his statement that it's all over by blowing upward at her hair; a few minutes later, he does the same. Those simple gestures lighten the mood because they are so ordinary, but there is nothing funny about them. They are sadly cute revelations of the pain and vulnerability of two young people facing the end of a relationship for the first time.

Probably the most frequently used indication of first love in anime

is the addition of a slight blush across the nose and cheekbones. It's an interesting effect that suggests the embarrassment and uncertainty of first love and also, because it's so close to the bawdier anime convention of a nosebleed to indicate sexual arousal, the source of that embarrassment. The blush appears sooner or later in most romantic comedies. It's not confined to humans either; in the *Sailor Moon S* movie, Luna blushes all across her cute little cat nose as she realizes the nature of her feelings toward the young man who rescued her from a traffic accident.

Probably the most effective use of the blush comes in the first episode of *Oh, My Goddess!* when Keiichi trips on a coffee can and winds up nose to nose with Belldandy. The mood has already been set with a sound track of Keiichi's heart beat drowning out all other sounds except for some sexy music that accompanies the montage of alluring visions of Belldandy that pass through his mind. By the time he trips and the blush spreads across his cheekbones, the sexual tension is so thick you can almost see it! The blush doesn't change that, but it does remind you of the essentially innocent nature of the young couple even before Megumi's arrival assures their continued chastity.

So, now do you fully understand the deeper significance of cuteness?

Me either.

Questions? Rants and raves? You can reach Toni Levi at levi@wwics.com!



Submitted For Your Discretion...

VIDEO

Reviews on anime & related media

The Dark Myth, Parts 1 & 2



© 1990 D. Moroboshi/Daiei Co. Ltd.
© 1997 Manga Entertainment

Throw together a young boy who discovers his destiny as the new Atman of the universe, a envious cousin who calms the Atman title as his own, a bucket of ghosts and demons, and you have the makings of entertaining anime. Well, I thought so as I read the boxes of both of these videos, but alas, "The Dark Myth" is too disjointed of a tale to be enjoyed.

The plot centers around a young boy named Takeshi who discovers, in a museum of all places, that he is to be the new Atman. The Atman is described as the energy of the universe. Takeshi has a cousin, Kikuchi-ko, who claims he is the rightful heir of the Atman title. So begins a rivalry as Kikuchi-ko and his clan tries to be the first to discover the secret of becoming the Atman. Meanwhile an old, bearded man named Takeuchi mysteriously appears and becomes Takeshi's ally, instructing him on how to be the proper Atman. Apparently, Takeshi has to be bitten eight times by various demons before he can be the Atman. Oh the horror of it all, as our hero travels all around Japan being bitten and abused...(yawn).

Besides being cliché, the plot suffers from long narrative passages. The narratives are long explanatory prose on Buddhism and the legends of the gods at the earth's infancy. All necessary, as we wouldn't understand otherwise why Takeshi was destined to be the Atman. Both of these videos totaled 100 minutes,

and in that time the authors barely had enough time to get a coherent plot together. Instead of letting the characters tell the story, the long narratives kept getting in the way. I couldn't figure out why everyone wanted to be the Atman in the first place. Maybe if I was a student of Buddhism I would have enjoyed the story better. A suggestion to Manga Entertainment, this video should be labeled "Knowledge of Buddhism Required".

Both videos were dubbed. The voice actors spoke Japanese in heavy American accents, but it was to be expected. I doubt better voice acting could have saved this plot. Also the promotional text on the box listed our hero as Takahashi, and he is called Takeshi throughout the whole video. The true identity of our protagonist remains shrouded in mystery not unlike the theme of "The Dark Myth".

— David Won

Debutante Detective Corps



© 1996 Toho / Head Room / Marcus
© 1996 ADVision

To tell the truth, I had seen the advertisements for this many months ago, but because they were all in Japanese, I couldn't figure out what it was about. Now that I've seen it, I'm still not sure what's the point of this show.

The story revolves around five young women who are attending a private school, and whose collective funds are equal to the Gross National Product of Japan (a few billion dollars). They receive a video-

tape threatening their lives. Of course, these women are anything but helpless; they each have a special ability, ranging from electronics to super strength to psychic powers. As for the artwork, think *Burn Up W*. These girls sure aren't built like any high school girls I knew.

The story is virtually nonexistent, but there are amusing scenes and for those who like the style, the artwork is, um, impressive. Not something I'd normally buy, but I'm sure there are a lot of people who will like this video and be glad to buy it.

— Eric Kihara

Street Fighter V: (vol.1 & 2)



© 1996 Capcom / Group TAC, Amuse, Yomiuri Telecasting Corp.

© 1997 Manga Entertainment, Inc.

Taken from the most popular video game of all time, SFV is based upon the exploits of the characters from Street Fighter II. The story takes place some years (I believe it is five or six from their ages) before the events in the game and movie.

In this made-for-television series, we follow Ken and Ryu as they explore the world to improve their skills. In many ways I found this anime more enjoyable and yet more disappointing than the movies. It was better because there is so much more time and space for the exploration of the characters of the two as well as that of Chun Li who also plays a major role (at least early on). We get to see Ryu and Chun Li

before they got so serious and single-minded. On the other hand, I found the characters of Ken and Chun Li rather annoying as well. Ken is too much the ego-maniac (which is NOT the impression I got from the game or the movie despite how the American cartoon likes to present him) and Chun Li is far too air-headed (okay, so she's only 15, but one doesn't change from complete bubble head to serious Interpol agent **that** quickly).

In final rating I'd say that this is not one that I'd recommend, but if you're desperate for good action sequences and you've seen that awful drivel that USA Network is trying to pass off as Street Fighter, buy these videos. They should fulfill your action craving. By the way, you may have noticed that I did not comment on the dubbing of the series. Well, that's because there as little remarkable to report. I've heard better and I've heard worse. I would like to say that the choices of voice actors was fairly decent and there were no real sore thumbs. I guess there is hope after all.

— Eric Kihara

As sword and sorcery goes, this film is no Conan. Yep, these two are definitely better looking, though they are lacking in the muscle department. But don't underestimate them just because they aren't Arnold look-alikes. They slay their share of villains in the battles, and they are definitely better looking.

Unfortunately, this show does very little in introducing the characters. In fact there is only one brief scene where we see how they met. Other than that, this film is not lacking in magic and sword fighting. I for one hope to see more of them. Although the plot was simple, the pace kept it going. What can I say, I'm also a sucker for fantasy anime. Don't get me wrong; I love giant mecha as much as the next guy, but there's something about a good sword-fight that just cannot be duplicated in a mecha-fight. I know I am definitely adding this to my library and I hope you will find it as entertaining as I did.

— Vid-Kid

Yotoden: Chronicle of the Warlord Period - Vol 1



© 1987 JVC

© 1997 Central Park Media

In 1580, a large comet splits the heavens and signals a battle between good and evil. Nobunaga Oda has ambitions to become the emperor of Japan and has joined forces with unholy powers to ensure his claim to the throne. The only thing that can stop him is a legend of three blades; when used together by the three main

Emblem of Gude



© 1994 Reiko Hikawa / Tairiku Shobo / M.T.V.

© 1997 ADVision

Sword and sorcery is the tone for this video: set in an ancient land, the story recounts a tale of two sword women, Efera and Jiliora. Born out of a time of trouble, these two travel the land in search of adventure; in this case, freeing three children from the clutches of an empire and its demented goddess. All that stands in their way is an army of solders as well as sorceresses. No problem.



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ninja clans, it can stop his mad scheme of power. To this end, Nobunaga will attempt anything to see them stopped even if it means destroying whole villages at a time. After the destruction of their clans, the woman Ayanosuke and the warrior Sakon journey across Japan to find the third ninja clan, in the hopes that they can find the third blade. Will they be able to find the blade in time, or will Nobunaga succeed in defeating the ancient prophecy?

For those of you who loved *The Record of the Lodoss War* and *Ninja Scroll* you will definitely want to include this into your collection. With stunning artwork and a well-written story line, Yotoden delivers anime with an edge. Unlike other "part one" stories, there is very little left hanging, but if this is any example of what's to come, you will not be disappointed. For those of you out there who love great animation combined with a great storyline, buy this series. You are going to get more than your money's worth.

As for me, well, I'm not one for historical stories (even if things were changed like adding demons and such) but I loved Yotoden and am definitely adding it to my

library. Kudos to U.S. Manga Corps for a job well done, I'm looking forward to your next project.

— Vid~Kid

Ellcia: Part 2 - Ghost Ship



© 1993 JVC / JAM CREATION / J.C. Staff
© 1997 ADVision

After the destruction of the islands, a huge shape appears in the waters. Princess Crystal has succeeded in reviving the

god ship Ellcia. As Eira's Pirate forces are scattered, she is captured by the Princess and taken hostage while the exportation of the god ship begins. Will Princess Crystal succeed in commanding the God Ship? Will Eira spend the rest of her days imprisoned? And can the remaining pirates keep out of trouble without Eira's leadership?

Well, in part two, we find that the answer to the above questions is NO!!! As the god ship starts to move on its own one can only guess at its destination. The small band of pirates trapped on board release a demon bent on destruction, and Eira discovers a clue to her past as she is forced to run to a ship that she has no control over. Well, I guess that things cannot get worse (until part three that is).

Mixing a touch of humor to this adventure made it more enjoyable. Available in both subtitled and English language dialogue, the story has developed smoothly without losing anything. For those who missed part one and cannot seem to find it, fear not, they recap the first part in the beginning and leave very little out.

As I have indicated above, this is out in both English and subtitled and I saw them both. It was a surprise for me; the dubbing was well done by way of emotions. The screams and shouts were better than most dubs that I've seen. My only complaint is not something that ADV has any control over... and that is character design. I'm sorry, but when I look at Eira, the image of Pipi Longstocking comes into mind and so does the urge to just grab those ponytails and pull... HARD. The video was great but (and I want to make it perfectly clear that this is my only reason.) due to the fact that I did not like Pipi Longstocking, I have decided not to purchase this video because of those !@#%\$^&* braids. Other than that, this is a great video and the storyline bears watching.

— Vid~Kid



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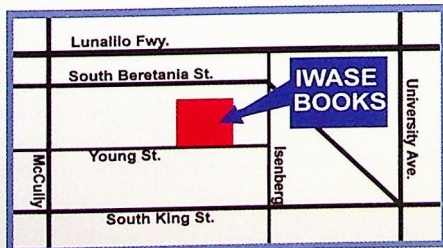


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Annie-May / The Item



© 1996 White
Radish



Do you have a Sony TV made in Malaysia? How about a pair of Levi's from Singapore? Or maybe a Honda Civic that was assembled in Detroit? Well, now there's anime coming from the US; more specifically, White Radish Studios in California. WR Studio's *Annie-May* and *The Item* were tossed into my hands for review and initially caused mixed feelings knowing I held two 'anime' that never touched Japanese soil. What did I think, beyond the colorfully illustrated videotape covers?

Annie-May was first off WR's assembly line and first on the viewing list. Originally made to follow the wake of the Daikon anime aired at AX '91, it's short, simple and meant to provide a laugh more than anything else. Using a mix of traditional hand-drawn animation and simple 3D computer graphics, this 5 minute short stars a busty, wild-haired female character who gets on the bad side of peace-seeking aliens and battles it out throughout most of the film. Unlike the original Daikon anime, little use of anime parody is used. With the lack of sound effects, voices and continuity throughout the shots, the initial appeal wears out real fast and your thumb suddenly has the urge to press the fast forward button on the VCR remote.

The Item is generations ahead of WR's first piece. This time starring not one, but three girls, this anime was also made in mind to start off an AX. Roughly about the same length as *Annie-May*, *The Item* uses much more fluid hand-drawn animation, coordinated shots, evenly blended 3-D and 2-D composite scenes, voice actors and (gasps!) a story! Three girls, based on the generic type of anime characters (mecha, sorcerer and magical transforming girls), are out to search for the 'item' while battling evil nasties perched high atop a castle on a cliff. The item ends up

being a golden pair of panties which is pretty much the only real humor I found in this anime. The level of parody is only the character designs of the girls themselves, but the voice acting is just plain horrendous.

Though nowhere near what 'real anime' has to offer, WR's accomplishments definitely have to be commended. If WR's possible third anime increases in quality proportionally to what they did from *Annie-May* to *The Item*, the next AX audience is in store for a pretty good, home-grown, proudly-produced-in-the-USA anime that fans can claim never saw the drawing boards of the Japanese. Let's hope they don't give up!

— Roy Sato

Neon Genesis Evangelion



© 1997 GAINAX / Project Eva. - TV Tokyo - NAS
© 1997 ADVision

There is one thing about Neo Genesis Evangelion: the story is certainly not simple and straightforward. There are more twists and turns in this series than a ride at Six Flags.

Episode seven mirrors real life as NERV battles budget cuts and bureaucracy. A Japanese company has come up with a pilotless robot that they hope to replace the Evas with. Somehow, something about the programming goes amuck and the robot runs rampant, with its nuclear power source overheating. It is up to Shinji and Misato to save the day. One thing about this episode, Misato starts thinking that things aren't quite right with what's going on. Can you say "conspiracy"?

The next episode on the tape pits

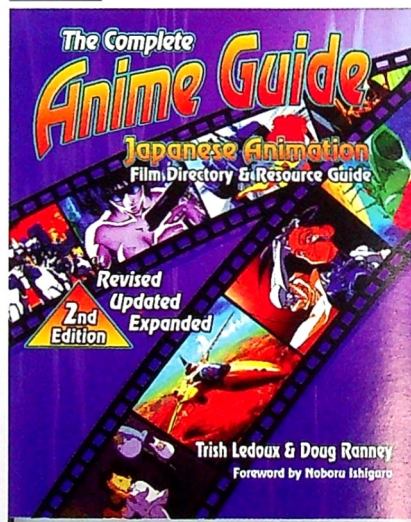
Angel against Eva in the middle of the ocean. Germany is sending Japan the second Eva and its pilot, Asuka. Asuka's overblown ego is shot down when she finds out that Shinji has a higher synchro-nize rate than she does (Go get 'em, Shinji!). In the end, the two work together to defeat the Angel.

Due to the fact that the publisher of this magazine is making us reporters do both the subbed and the dubbed versions, I guess I have to say something about the quality of the dubbing: not bad. There are, of course, some voices that I don't agree with, but on the whole, I must say that I am reasonably impressed with the work. One thing that subbing has over dubbing is the emotion that is put in when screaming or cheering. Somehow, the English voice actors just can't seem to do it. I would suggest that you stick to seeing it one way or the other. Don't mix and match.

— Luna

BOOKS

THE COMPLETE ANIME GUIDE 2nd EDITION



© 1997 Trish Ledoux & Doug Ranney
Tiger Mountain Press

The Complete Anime Guide 2nd Edition, by Trish Ledoux and Doug Ranney, is a very useful guide of the small but growing world of anime in America. But for those who already have the 1st edition, how does it differ?

Not by much.

Like the 1st edition, the 2nd edition offers a brief history of anime and a comparison between Japanese and American animation. This is followed by a chapter about Japanese animated works that have made it to American shores. Shows like *Astro Boy*, *Star Blazers*, *Captain Harlock*, *Robotech*, and many others.

The main portion of the book is dedicated to a sort of directory of anime available in America. In essence, the 2nd edition is identical to the 1st edition, plus more recent additions (which should go without saying). But there's a small difference: the brief descriptions of the anime works are quite opinionated, rather than the dry, practically "copied from the back of the video tape box" descriptions in the 1st edition. The authors stated that they felt the 1st edition was too much of a "video directory" instead of the anime guide that they were aiming for. So in the 2nd edition, they added their own interpretations and point of views. I felt they were a little too opinionated and rather unnecessary, but all in all, it's not such a big deal. It's still a great guide for beginners and hardcore otakus alike.

In the end, I decided that there really wasn't that much of a difference between the two editions, but with either one, you get your money's worth.

— Eddie A.S. Mak

[Eds. note: The most important reason the second edition is better is that we're in it!]



MANGA

INU-YASHA



© 1997 Takahashi Rumiko / Shonen Sunday Comics

Barely a year after *Ranma* ends, Rumiko Takahashi is back with her new series, *Inu-Yasha* (Dog-Demon). For those who don't read Japanese, good news: Viz Comics is translating the series and releasing it almost simultaneously with the Japanese manga.

The story starts with the half boy, half demon Inu-Yasha sacking a village in order to obtain the "Shikon no Dama", or "Jewel of Four Souls". With this jewel, Inu-Yasha can become a full fledged demon. Before he can get away, he is put to a cursed sleep by the miko (Shinto priestess [Eds. note: see Animeco #6]) Kikyo. She is mortally wounded, however, and asks her younger sister to burn the jewel with her body.

Fast forward five hundred years to the present. The other central character is a modern day fifteen-year-old girl named Kagome. One day, she is attacked by a ghoul from a cursed well near her house, and is brought back in time to the Sengoku (Warring States) period, about fifty years after the Inu-Yasha incident. She awakens Inu-Yasha and discovers many things about herself and the jewel; she may

be the reincarnation of Kikyo, and many of the inherent powers start to awaken, despite never being trained.

Inu-Yasha, to be blunt, is a real @\$\$\$. Ranma was a kind of a jerk, but basically a good, if somewhat strange, boy. Inu-Yasha, being a demon, is just plain crude and rude. Though not as evil as some demons go, he still gets on everyone's nerves with insults and threats. Whether he grows better or worse remains to be seen.

Of course, Kagome and Inu-Yasha don't get along, but they are more or less forced to work together in order to search for the pieces of the recently shattered jewel. With him insulting her left and right, ("... Kikyo was more intelligent looking and more beautiful..."), and her making him sit like a dog (heh, heh) upon command, things are bound to get worse.

So far, this seems to be a rather promising series which hopefully will last as long as *Urusei Yatsura* and *Ranma*.

— Eddie A.S. Mak

GAMES

MACROSS DIGITAL MISSION VF-X



© 1997 BIGWEST / Bandai Visual

Finally, a *Macross* game for the Sony PlayStation, and with some big names in the credits, too: Mikimoto Haruhiko, Kawamori Shoji, Moriyama Yuji, Inoue Kikuo, Iijima Mari just to name a few.

The game starts off in a rather impressive fashion with a pretty cool intro, mixing high grade animation and some computer graphics. Thankfully, this Japanese game comes with instructions in English for us Japanese impaired. As the ace stud pilot, you begin with the old but venerable

VF-1x Valkyrie, but as you pass certain stages in the game, you also gain access to more advanced fighters; VF-4G Lightning, VF-11B Thunderbolt, VF-17D Nightmare, and the two most powerful, the VF-19A Excalibur and the VF-22 Sturmvogel II of *Macross Plus* fame.

Unfortunately, the game does not meet up to standards. The graphics are only average, and gameplay is somewhat difficult, though the use of an analog flight stick alleviates this problem. Moreover, the stages are repetitive, reducing it to nothing more than a "shoot everything in sight" type of game. As it is, it's very hard to fight in the fighter mode, and the situation often demands that you transform into the Gerwalk or Battroid mode, which leaves you far more vulnerable to attacks.

The game is not without its merits, however. The objective of the game is to rescue the recently kidnapped musical group "Milky Dolls", consisting of five (teenage) members, who are vital to some defense project. As you rescue each one, you are treated to an animated FMV. They don't do much more than just sit and talk to you, but it's still nice to look at.

All in all, a so-so game, in my opinion. I would recommend renting this one rather than buying it, assuming your PlayStation can play Japanese games.

— Eddie A.S. Mak

RANMA ½: BATTLE RENAISSANCE



© 1996 Shogakukan

Not too long ago, a very popular series came to an end, but its legacy still lives on, this time in the form of a 3D fighting game. With its entrance, *Ranma ½: Battle Renaissance* can't help but be compared to the other 3D fighting games out there.

Unfortunately, it falls flat on its face. This, ladies and gentlemen, is definitely no *Tekken* or *Virtua Fighter*. There is almost nothing in this game that is impressive in any way. Graphics-wise, it's nothing to write home about, and gameplay-wise, it is pretty substandard.

There are only eight fighters to choose from, far fewer than the dozens upon dozens of characters in the *Ranma ½* universe. Characters like Ukyo, Kodachi, Ninomiya Sensei, Mousse, etc are missing, while one timer Ryu Kumon (the *Ranma* impersonator, in case you forgot) is included. Go figure.

Of course, it wouldn't be *Ranma* without the transformations. Occasionally, during the fighting round, it will rain on one half of the screen, and assuming your (transformable) fighter is in that half, you will transform, of course. But of all the "cursed" characters, only *Ranma* and *Genma* have any offensive capabilities, and even then are severely weakened. Moreover, the transformations take a lot of time, slowing down gameplay even more than it already is.

Unless someone threatens you with your life, don't even think about getting this game. Save your money for a root canal; it's money better spent, and a lot less painful.

— Eddie A.S. Mak

CD-ROM

MARUGOTO AKAZUKIN CHACHA



© Inner Brain Inc.
Price 3,980 yen

If cuteness had a middle name, it would be *Akazukin Chacha* (Red Hooded

Chacha). Imagine *Sailor Moon's* world, with everyone three feet shorter, stupider, eyes twice as large, and with only one hero in a short skirt, instead of a dozen. That, along with a strange sense of humor, is *Akazukin Chacha* in a nutshell.

Here we have a different form of *Chacha*: *Akazukin Chacha* on a computer CD. Labeled "Marugoto Akazukinchacha", this Windows-95-only multimedia CD is meant for those *Chacha* otakus who just can't get away from the anime's zaniness and must have their daily dose of *Chacha* in the form of screensavers, desktop art and voice files of actors in the anime.

Like any grey-import, this multimedia CD comes with its own bugs. Most obvious is the fact that "Marugoto Akazukinchacha" is meant for Japanese Windows 95 systems. Not to say nothing will work, but the installer and readme files are done in Japanese, so running it in English Windows systems does a beautiful job in turning the text into a form of a strange alien-like language. A little guessing is required here, but it won't blow up your computer. Trust me; my \$6,000 PC workstation hasn't hiccuped since installing it.

While there are almost 100 different desktop images to choose from and 363 voice files to play over your computer speakers (note: SoundBlaster card required), the maincourse is the animated screensavers. You won't find any digitized, clips-straight-from-the-anime type screensavers here like *SOME* other companies like to get away with. The artwork is done by original staff at Gallop Studios, the guys who put the original anime together, so think of *Marugoto Akazukinchacha* as an original episode just for your PC.

With the amount of data stuffed on this CD, you could have your computer exploding with *Chacha* sounds and visuals, whether it be simply changing the look of your desktop, or changing the error beep to a voice of *Chacha* yelling "Chacha ga okotta!" (*Chacha's* pissed!). Complete with a foldout guide to the CD's innards and a 13 piece sticker set of the *Chacha* gang to presumably paste all over your \$3,000 computer, I definitely recommend "Marugoto Akazukinchacha" for the casual and hardcore *Chacha* fan.

— Roy Sato

especially when many of the children viewers began to speak freely about fighting evil tyrants. One of Marcos' cronies also complained to him that there was no one watching his sponsored show, which happened to be on at about the same time as Voltes V. By faking a parental agitation group, and concocting a ridiculous story about a child plummeting to his death, Marcos was able to justify banning the shows. People who questioned this through official channels were threatened with imprisonment. In the end, the banning of the two shows became just another tally mark against Marcos, which ultimately led to the "People's Revolution" that toppled his regime. Many of the people, including members of the military who took part in the "People's Revolution", had grown up watching Voltes V and Mazinger Z — the show's ideals had a strong influence on them.

One of the results of the "People's Revolution" was that it allowed many anime shows to be on the prime time T.V. schedule; most of these anime shows ended up being dubbed in the Tagalog dialect, although some are still dubbed in English. The post-revolution governments, despite their somewhat poor administrative performance pretty much left the anime shows alone. However, in 1995, President Ramos had tried to use the poor excuse of "violence in children's programming" to reduce the number of anime shows, but only one or two got pulled; after that Ramos backed down quickly. An interesting note is that there was one horrible live action anime/X-Men rip-off local Filipino show in 1995 called "Batang X", that was just as violent, but since it was a Filipino show, it was immune to Ramos's "special ban".

In many ways, the Philippines is a prime example of how much of an impact anime can have. Television affects everyone even if you don't watch it, especially if you are a dictator of a country. Anime, in this case, shows the power of popular culture.



see if there were any panels to listen to. I didn't find anything interesting, so I went around and talked to some of the artists and animators. I can now swear to you that Shawn the Touched of White Radish Productions has quite an apropos moniker. Touched by what, I'm still trying to figure.

Walking by the main video room, I saw a vid playing that looked cool. Since my brain was still somewhat fogged over from talking to the White Radish folks, I decided to step in to the video room and watch some anime. The sound system and large screen video system in the main video room were terrific. The only problem with watching videos at a con like this, is that I get depressed whenever I go back home. It just looks so much better when it's eight feet tall.

It wasn't long before my stomach started growling, so I had to leave and go downstairs to the ice-cream shop and get a sandwich. While I was waiting in line, I looked at the panel schedule again. This time I noticed one with an interesting title, "Mommy, Why Does My Anime Have Tentacles In It?" It started in five minutes and featured Amanda Wynn. This, I had to see.

I grabbed my sandwich and went upstairs. The panel also featured Matt Greenfield of A.D. Vision. But, the star of the show was definitely Miss Wynn. You see, she had decided that it would be easier for her to discuss the delicate subject of "tentacle anime" with the help of her (not so) little hand puppet, Hentai-saurus the Echi-Dino. I have never had so much difficulty keeping tuna salad out of my nose in my life. Laughing that hard can be dangerous.

When the panel was over, I had to leave quickly and find a restroom to clean myself up. I didn't know if mayonnaise would leave a permanent stain on my A-Kon T-shirt (with artwork by Hiroyuki Kitakubo). It was a good thing too, because when I got out I noticed that the line was already forming for the infamous A-Kon Kos-play (i.e. costume contest).



To be concluded next issue.

COMING NEXT ISSUE

Much as horoscopes are used here, in Japan, blood-types are used to determine relationship and job compatibility...even among anime characters!

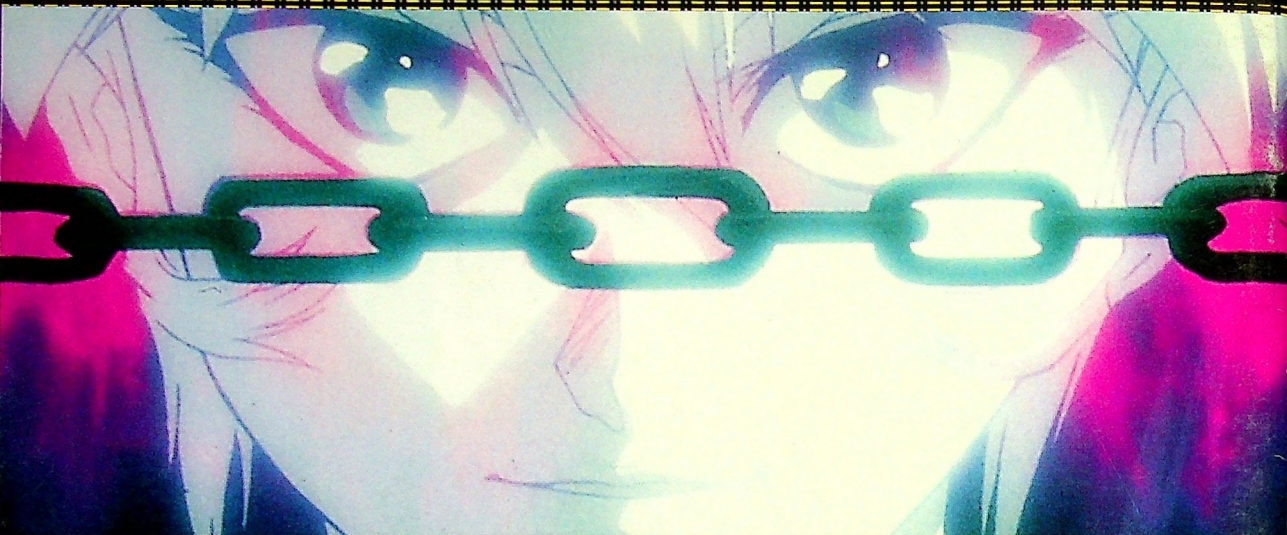


Join us next time for an entertaining look at anime characters, their "blood types" and what it all means... if anything...

Reviews, news and more...
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